

## Why Do People Commit Suicide?

- ❖ Psychological/physical pain
  - ❖ Depression
  - ❖ Anxiety
  - ❖ Relationship problems
  - ❖ Being under investigation
- \* Alcohol or drug problems significantly increase the risk for suicide!

## What Should I Look For?

- Recent loss (actual or perceived)
- Recent increase in problems (under investigation, financial, marital, work)
- Sad/depressed
- Hopeless, no future-oriented plans
- Socially isolated/withdrawn
- Irritability or increased conflict with others
- Sudden drop in job performance
- Increased alcohol or drug usage
- Sleep or appetite problems
- Thinking is constricted, black/white, rigid
- Increased risk taking behavior
- Giving away possessions or preparing for death (will, correcting beneficiary information, etc.)
- Talking about suicide
- Has viable plan and means
- History of suicidal behavior
- Practicing the plan or means of suicide (suicide rehearsal)

While few of these by themselves is a guarantee that the person is feeling suicidal, each of these should alert a “backup officer” to be concerned and start asking questions!

## AID LIFE

This acronym may help you remember what to do when assisting a person who is suicidal:

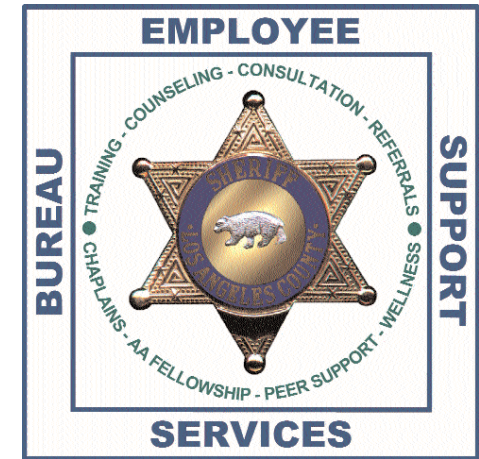
- A Ask.** Do not be afraid to ask, “Are you thinking about hurting yourself?” or “Are you thinking about suicide?”
  - I Intervene immediately.** Take action. Listen and let the person know he or she is not alone.
  - D Don’t keep it a secret.**
- 
- L Locate help.** Seek out a professional at ESSB, Peer Support Person, Chaplain, friend or family member.
  - I Involve Command.** If the person is imminently suicidal, be prepared to involve a supervisor to save his or her life.
  - F Find someone to stay with the person now.** Don’t leave the person alone.
  - E Expedite.** Get help now. An at-risk person needs immediate attention from professionals.



During business hours call Employee Support Services Bureau at 213-738-3500.

After business hours, the on-call psychologist can be reached at 213-206-5528 or paged through Sheriff’s Headquarter’s Bureau at 323-526-5541.

## Officer Needs Assistance!



## Will YOU Roll Backup?

*Cops do not hesitate to protect fellow officers when a suspect is threatening them - even if it puts their own life at risk.*

*But what if the person threatening your colleague's life is him or herself?*

**If you think a co-worker is contemplating SUICIDE, will you take action? Will you have the courage to “roll backup?”**

*Employee Support Services Bureau (ESSB)  
(213) 738-3500*

## Why Should You Read This Brochure?

- ✦ 85% of people who commit suicide communicate their intentions ahead of time.
- ✦ The most vulnerable group for suicide is white males.
- ✦ A peace officer is more likely to be a victim of suicide than homicide.
- ✦ 86% of cops use a firearm to commit suicide.
- ✦ Alcohol increases the risk for suicide.
- ✦ Suicide has a devastating effect on family, friends and colleagues.

## What Interferes With You “Rolling Backup?”

*I was afraid to ask about suicidal thoughts.*

You can not give someone the idea of committing suicide.

*What if I’m wrong?*

Cops have good instincts when it comes to reading people. If you are getting a feeling that somebody may hurt him/herself - trust your gut!

*If they really are suicidal, I won’t be able to stop them.*

Suicidal thoughts are often impulsive and temporary. If you can get the person past the impulse and to proper assistance, he or she will often recover and go on with life.

*Suicidal people want to die!*

Most people thinking of suicide are wanting a way out of intolerable physical or emotional pain. Some part of them wants to live and you can help them find a way to do it.

*If I say something to anybody, his or her career is over.*

Your best option is to think in terms of necessary and sufficient force. Intervene as much as is necessary to keep the person alive and get him or her assistance.

If the person is suicidal but cooperative with seeking help, confidential counseling through ESSB or voluntary inpatient care may be enough.

If, however, the person is uncooperative and/or imminently suicidal, a supervisor may become the “necessary force” you need to get somebody to help. While involving the Department may result in the individual being relieved of duty, the person still has a good chance of getting his or her job back once the problems are resolved. The **possibility** of losing your job should not “weigh” more than your life!

## So What Can I Do?

Eighty-five percent of people who attempt suicide tell somebody first - through actions or statements. As a colleague, you may be the first person to see or hear these warning signs. If you think someone may be having thoughts about harming him/herself...

- \* Trust your instincts.
- \* Reach out to them as soon as possible.
- \* Ask “Are you thinking about hurting your self?”
- \* Contact ESSB for a confidential consultation.

Once you have confirmed the person is having thoughts of harming him/herself...

- \* Immediately contact ESSB.
- \* Ascertain if the person has a plan.
- \* Ask permission to secure weapon(s), including backup(s).
- \* **Do Not** leave the person alone.
- \* Help delegate necessary duties until the crisis is resolved, such as child care or other daily responsibilities.
- \* Get debriefed when the situation is resolved - for your own peace of mind.