Role of Employers in Preventing Suicides

Suicide is a critical public health issue in the United States and a leading cause of death among working age adults. Creating a workplace culture of health and safety includes mental health.

There is no single cause for suicide. Often, stressors and health issues come together to create feelings of hopelessness and despair. Most people who take their lives exhibit one or more warning signs either through what they say or what they do. It is important that managers and coworkers are prepared to notice and act on changes in a colleague's behavior.

Set the Tone

Employers should lead with compassion and foster a supportive environment:

- Speak out about workplace stress and mental health challenges and express your commitment to prioritizing employee mental health and well-being.

- Ask about workplace stressors and discuss what support or services may help. Implement changes that are feasible based on feedback.

- Institute an "open door" policy that encourages employees to share concerns and ideas with management without fear of retaliation.

- Encourage employees to connect and support one another by providing opportunities to interact.

Implement Policies and Programs

- Review policies and procedures for how work is managed to determine if additional flexibilities are needed.

- Evaluate your overall work environment, such as customer interactions, productivity schedule, pace of work, etc., to determine if there are workplace stress factors you could address.

- Share educational resources that address workplace stress, mental health, and substance use.

- If your organization has an employee assistance program (EAP), remind employees about the benefits and that it is confidential, and encourage them to use it.

- Help employees understand their health benefit plans, including coverages for mental health and substance use.

- Offer support for employees who have been affected by suicide loss, providing resources and services to support their healing journey.

- Provide information about mental health resources and services available in your community.

Equip Frontline Supervisors

- Reinforce the supervisor's role in listening and validating employees' feelings, concerns, and experiences. It's important they understand that being dismissive can be harmful.

- Ensure supervisors implement all the flexibilities that you have built into your work policies and procedures. Encourage them to be creative in making adjustments for employees who are experiencing stressors at home and work, or who have been affected by suicide loss.

- Invite professionals to educate and train supervisors to recognize suicide warning signs and initiate conversations with employees.

- Create space in management and other meetings for frontline supervisors to share their own concerns and learn from each other.

- Hold supervisors accountable and coach those who are struggling with implementing your policies and programs.

Be Prepared

- **Be Aware** that there can be warning signs for suicide risk. Mental health and suicide can be difficult to talk about—especially with work colleagues—but your actions can make a difference. When you work closely with others, you may sense when someone is struggling.

- **Pay Attention** to warning signs that may signal someone is at risk for suicide.

- **Reach Out** if you are concerned about an employee or coworker. Talk with them privately, give them your full attention, and listen without judgment.

- **Take Action** in a crisis. Stay with the employee and seek immediate help. Contact emergency services, call or text 988, or visit 988lifeline.org/chat.

- **Be ready** to support yourself and help coworkers cope with a suicide loss.

Share Resources with Your Employees

- **988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline**: Call or text 988 or visit 988lifeline.org/chat for 24/7, free, and confidential support, including prevention and crisis resources for employees. Veterans may call 988 and press 1 or visit veteranscrisisline.net.

- **Crisis Text Line**: Text "TALK" to 741741 or visit crisistextline.org from anywhere in the USA to connect with a trained Crisis Counselor for free, 24/7.

For more information, visit osha.gov/preventingsuicides, osha.gov/workplace-stress, or:

- American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (afsp.org)

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (cdc.gov/suicide)

- National Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention (theactionalliance.org)

- National Institute of Mental Health (nimh.nih.gov)

- Suicide Prevention Resource Center (sprc.org)

Suicide Risk: Warning Signs

TALK	BEHAVIOR		MOODS
» Wanting to die or kill oneself » Feeling trapped » Feeling like a burden to others » Feeling like they are in unbearable pain » Feeling hopeless	» Looking for a way to end one's life » Increased use of alcohol or drugs » Withdrawing from activities » Isolating from family/friends » Sleeping too much or too little	» Saying goodbye to people » Giving away prized possessions » Venting aggression or rage » Displaying fatigue	» Depression » Anxiety » Loss of interest » Relief or sudden improvement » Humiliation or shame » Agitation or anger » Irritability