

BEST PRACTICES IN SUICIDE RISK ASSESSMENT DOCUMENTATION

Timeliness

- Upon referral, the assessment occurs promptly and the time and date of the referral are clearly stated in the risk assessment.

Referral

- The specific reason for the referral and the referral source are clearly identified in the risk assessment.
- The referral source is interviewed and his/her comments are included in the risk assessment.

Risk Factors

- A standardized risk assessment tool is used to guide the clinical interview and its use is documented in the risk assessment.
- Risk factors for suicide are identified and discussed in the risk assessment.
- If the potential of secondary gain is identified, secondary gain is not used to dismiss significant risk factors or to rule out suicide risk.

Protective Factors

- Protective factors are identified, weighed in relation to risk factors, and documented in the risk assessment.
- The clinician weighs the risk factors against the protective factors and makes a clinical judgment.

Diagnosis

- A DSM Axis I and Axis II diagnosis is present in the risk assessment.
- The criteria supporting the diagnosis are clearly stated.
- A mental status examination is conducted and findings are documented in the risk assessment.

Follow-up Recommendations

- Follow-up recommendations are clearly stated.
- The clinician's follow-up recommendations are justified based upon the conclusions drawn in the risk assessment.
- Interventions in addition to constant/increased observation are considered and discussed. These interventions are focused on risk factors identified in the assessment, i.e., treatment is initiated.

Consultation

- The clinician consults with mental health clinicians, health care providers, custodial staff, and other staff knowledgeable of the offender.
- This consultation is documented in the risk assessment.

Collateral Information

- A review of collateral information is conducted, to include mental and physical health records, as well as legal and custodial records.
- Relevant findings are noted in the risk assessment.