

Safety Planning with Children/ Adolescents for Primary Care Providers:

- 1) Introduce your agenda **after** listening: “I care about you and how you’ve been feeling. I don’t want you to die. Let’s make a plan together to keep you safe when you have suicidal thoughts.”
- 2) Show them your plan: “This is a Safety Plan, where we write what you can do when you have thoughts about wanting to die. Here is where we can write the people who will support you.”
- 3) Complete it with them, using their words. Write down triggers for SI. Ask what they are already doing that helps reduce SI, including eliciting unhealthy coping (self-injury, substance use, eating, social conflicts). Consider their unhealthy coping in a risk assessment: for example Alcohol use increases risk of attempts. Write down and emphasize any healthy coping that they are doing (talking to someone, taking a shower, watching TV, exercising, listening to music, praying, playing video games.)
- 4) Ask them if the coping plan is realistic for the situations where they had SI in the past (in school, at night etc.) Ask their caregiver if they can help the patient follow it. Also consider their reaction to the patient’s SI. Review a Safe Homes handout with them and see if they can secure their home environment.
- 5) Review next steps with patient and caregiver- Referrals, medication interventions, follow up appointments. Write down this part of the plan! Put copies of all written information in the patient’s medical record.

Note: Making the safety plan may reveal that they need further evaluation/ assessment. Be prepared to say that you’re not feeling confident in this plan and want them to be assessed by a mental health professional today.