

# United States Postal Services EAP

## Suicide Awareness and Prevention Presentation Script

### Slide 1:

Welcome to the USPS EAP presentation on suicide awareness and prevention. My name is Tosha Morris, and I am a USPS EAP consultant. Today I am going to discuss suicide awareness and prevention with you. A few notes of preparation before we proceed. We understand the topic we are discussing is very sensitive in nature; it is encouraged to be mindful to take good care of yourself – before, during and after the presentation. If further support is needed, please reach out to your local EAP consultant.

### Slide 2:

The goals of this presentation are to discuss warning signs of suicide in self and others, to promote and provide education on things every person can do to support someone who may be struggling with thoughts of ending their lives, and to discuss ways that we all can work collaboratively to prevent suicide in our communities.

### Slide 3:

Talking about suicide can often feel very difficult to do for a multitude of reasons. Suicide is the 11<sup>th</sup> leading cause of death in the United States. The Centers for Disease Control published statistics in 2021 where it was calculated that over 48,000 Americans died by suicide, but there were an estimated 1.7 million attempts of suicide made. It is for that reason it is imperative that we have this discussion. Despite the stigma, the shame and the misconceptions that makes it challenging to understand and discuss suicide, we must have the discussion. It is critical because suicide is complex, yet treatable. Suicidal thoughts are difficult to battle, but manageable to battle with the support of others. If you are having thoughts of harming yourself, please tell someone. If you suspect someone you know isn't doing well, please ask them.

### Slide 4:

In order to begin a conversation about suicide with someone who may be struggling, we must first understand the warning signs of suicide. Some common warning signs of suicide are if a person begins to talk or fixate about death or suicide, if you notice a person engaging in reckless or dangerous behaviors, if there is increased use of alcohol or other drugs, concerns with sleep – whether that's a person getting too much sleep or too little sleep – if you notice a person's basic self-care is lacking, or if there is a person who is neglecting their doctor's orders for treatment for medical concerns. Other concerns that would be warning signs for suicide are a person with increased anger, intensified mood swings or general withdrawing or isolating from other people.

**Slide 5:**

While the previously mentioned warning signs are also relevant in all people, teens are a special demographic. Due to their brains still being developed, there are some additional warning signs that we'd like to bring to your attention. If you begin to notice a change in grades, a loss of interest in social activities or schoolwork, a teen who is isolating themselves or who discusses harming themselves, a teen who's social media posts are frequently about hopelessness and helplessness or sadness and isolation, changes in eating or sleeping habits, physical symptoms of emotional distress to include frequent stomachaches, headaches and extreme fatigue, a lack of response to praise, neglecting their own personal appearances, giving away their belongings, an abuse of alcohol or drugs, or even mentioning feeling trapped. These are all additional indicators that your teen or a teen that you know may be struggling with thoughts of suicide.

**Slide 6:**

While it is often easier to recognize when someone else might be struggling, it is equally important to recognize when we may be struggling as individuals. Here are a few common warning signs of suicide and indicators that it may be time for you to seek help for yourself. If you have noticed your own thoughts of death or suicide present, feeling like a burden to other people, a lack of desire to connect with people that you know and love and care for, looking for ways to harm self, increased anxiety or increased agitation or anger, experiencing significant issues with sleep, a lack of interest in your own personal self-care or hygiene or grooming, a general feeling that things just aren't important, you feel unimportant, and intensified mood swings. These are all indicators that it could be time to get some help.

**Slide 7:**

If you have recognized that you may be experiencing some of those warning signs, it is very important to reach out for help. This can be really difficult to do, however I always like to emphasize that healing happens in community. If you're having a tough time, please speak up and tell someone. Start that conversation, no matter how uncomfortable, no matter how anxious you might be. Take the courage to be honest and be direct about your feelings and know that it is very brave of you to express how you are feeling. And if you have someone who has reached out to you out of concern, be willing to accept the support. You matter. People want to help you. Please let them help. Try not to isolate yourself, as tempting as this may be. Know your resources. At the end of this presentation, we will provide you some resources. I encourage people to add those resources into their cell phones. To have those resources on hand so that you know you are worthy and deserving of all the help you need.

**Slide 8:**

If you have noticed those warning signs in someone else and you are concerned but unsure what to say, what to do, we want to provide you some support with that. The right words differ for every single person. Those conversations are going to look different. Not every single person will want to talk. Not every single person will want to come forward, but please do not let that stop you from reaching out and expressing your concern and support to them. Reassure people you are there for them, that they are meaningful and valuable to you. After you initiate a conversation, be willing to listen, to be empathetic to the person that you are talking to. Try not to talk them out of how they are feeling, instead share resources with them. If you come to know that they do have a plan to harm themselves, don't leave them alone once you are aware of that information. Ask them if you can call for additional help and support. Know that you do not have to be the expert. That you can just be a person who supports them along the way. Contact someone that they do trust or call 988 to provide them with access to a trained counselor. But more importantly, provide reassurance, hope, and resources.

**Slide 9:**

Offering hope can be one of the single most important things that you can do to save a life. Reassuring a person who feels hopeless that their life is important to you can be more valuable than what you will ever understand. People who are often struggling with thoughts of suicide don't want to die; they often just can't see the light at the end of the tunnel. So we are there to remind them that the light is there, that we can see that light for them, and that they are not alone. Another thing you can do is to support them in coming up with a plan to keep them safe. Never feel compelled to keep someone's thoughts about suicide secret. Please get immediate care and help and ensure that the appropriate people are alerted. Never feel like you have to take on this responsibility alone, because you as the helper are also not alone.

**Slide 10:**

Every single person listening to this presentation can help. We all play a role in the prevention of suicide. Trust your gut, reach out, and ask a person what's going on. Be direct asking a person if they've thought about suicide. If they've had thoughts that they've wanted to end their lives. If they're having thoughts of wanting to go to sleep and not wake up. If they give you an answer of, "yes," listen and remain nonjudgmental. Be empathetic, be calm, be patient and offer support, reminding that person that they are not alone. Be prepared to support them in developing an action plan. That action can be offering to call EAP together. Reminding them that they also have support and resources to get help.

**Slide 11:**

Three of the biggest things that we can all do for preventative action are to cultivate hope, build resiliency and make connections. All of these contribute to the safety and wellbeing of every single person that we encounter. Cultivating hope for our future can look like setting realistic goals, practicing

optimism, looking for inspiration and role models, prioritizing our self-care and seeking professional help.

**Slide 12**

Building resiliency is a protective factor. The ability to bounce back really creates a key component to suicide prevention. We toughen and strengthen that ability to bounce back by having a good support system, practicing good self-care, developing problem solving skills, having healthy coping strategies, maintaining our perspective and practicing self-compassion.

**Slide 13:**

We make connections every single day, at home, at work, in our communities. And this too is a part of our protective action to prevent suicidal thoughts and behaviors. Connectedness can lead to increased social contact, lower levels of isolation, and an increased number of positive relationships. Whether those relationships be with our family members, our friends, our co-workers, or our general community. We want to connect because it is critical for thriving.

**Slide 14:**

I want to encourage every single one to pull out your cell phone or jot down on a piece of paper or sticky note to have this resource on hand for yourself and for other people. If you or someone you know is experiencing a mental health crisis or considering self-harm, please call or text 988 immediately. 988 is designed as a code that will route any caller to the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline. When you call or text this number you will be connected to a trained counselor. They are a part of the existing lifeline network. These trained counselors will listen to your concerns, provide support, and connect every caller to the appropriate resources. Remember, we don't have to do this alone.

**Slide 15:**

We recognize that someone listening to this presentation today may have lost someone to suicide. If that is you, we know that this is absolutely devastating. It can bring about intense emotions or symptoms of grief which can be gradual. We also understand that the healing can take time. We encourage you to be patient with yourself and also practice self-compassion, seek support in those you trust, practice good routine self-care, educate yourself, avoid blame and guilt as much as possible, find ways to honor the memory of your lost loved ones and seek professional help.

**Slide 16:**

EAP can help anyone here. Our website, [EAP4YOU.com](http://EAP4YOU.com), provides USPS employees access to suicide awareness and prevention materials as well as a health resource library containing articles, checklists,

guides, and toolkits to help you care for yourself physically, mentally, and emotionally. Visit the EAP online today. The EAP call center offers USPS employees access to support over the phone 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. If you or someone you know is struggling, please give us a call anytime. Thank you for listening to this presentation.