



AN INFORMATION GUIDE FOR FAMILIES WHO HAVE LOST A LOVED ONE TO SUICIDE

**Victim Services Unit
Halton Regional Police Service**

Halton Regional Police Service
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The Halton Regional Police Service is recognized as one of the leading police agencies in the areas of diversity and community policing initiatives, and is committed to ensuring Halton Region remains as safe tomorrow as it is today.

One Vision
One Mission
One Team

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WE ARE HERE TO HELP

We recognize this is an extremely difficult time for you. It is important for you to know that the Halton Regional Police Service (HRPS) is here to assist you in any way possible in relation to the death of your loved one.

Our duty is to bring an appropriate resolution to the case by conducting a professional and thorough investigation.

During the course of this investigation, many things may happen. This Guide for Families Who Have Lost a Loved One to Suicide will help you gain a better understanding of the next steps. Included are key contact numbers, information about what to expect, and valuable resources to support you, if required.

If there is anything this Guide has not addressed, do not hesitate to ask. We are here to help. Please call us at 905-825-4777.



WHO WILL BE INVOLVED?

The Halton Regional Police Service responds to all calls for service, including attempted suicides and deaths by suicide. In the case of serious injury or sudden death, various police officers, members of the Criminal Investigations Bureau, and, at the discretion of the officer or the next-of-kin, the Victim Services Unit, will be dispatched to the scene.

Criminal Investigations Bureau (CIB)

Members of the Criminal Investigations Bureau (CIB) develop and initiate investigative projects, conduct follow-up investigations, and provide investigative support and mentoring to uniform patrol officers. These experienced members collaborate with officers from other Districts as well as other police services to conduct their investigations in accordance with the highest standards of policing.

Some of the goals of the CIB are to reduce the number of crimes against people and property, to closely monitor the behaviours of repeat offenders, and to identify those responsible for committing crimes. Their ongoing work to hold those accountable helps maintain public confidence and ensures the safety and well-being of the entire community.

The CIB works in partnership with the Victim Services Unit here in Halton. Combined, they have the expertise to answer questions about their investigations, and to provide guidance and support throughout and beyond the investigative process.

Victim Services Unit

The Halton Regional Police Service's Victim Services Unit provides 24-hour crisis intervention to victims of crime and trauma through on-scene assistance, telephone support, and community referrals. Some of the services offered to family members include:

- Next-of-kin notifications for other family members, including those who reside outside of Halton Region
- Acting as a liaison for the family with the Criminal Investigations Bureau
- Assisting with arrangements after a death by suicide (e.g. funeral planning, etc.)
- Assisting families with gaining a better understanding of the investigation as well as next steps in the aftermath of the death
- Referring clients to various municipal, provincial, and federal finance programs that assist with funeral planning
- Referring those affected to bereavement counselling
- Support with notifying and supporting children affected by the death

Coroner

In Ontario, the Coroner is a medical doctor who has specialized training and is appointed to investigate circumstances surrounding a death. A Coroner is called to the scene of all deaths by suicide and is required to determine the cause of death of your loved one. The Coroner will also direct police with regard to the handling of your loved one's body.

The Coroner/Funeral Process

In a death by suicide, a Coroner can order an autopsy (a post-mortem). Post-mortems for the Region of Halton are conducted at the Centre of Forensic Sciences (CFS) in Toronto. A post-mortem will not generally affect a family's ability to view the body of their loved one. However, it is important to be aware that viewing your loved one immediately following a medical examination such as a post-mortem may be emotionally difficult. Information pertaining to the death may be obtained from the Coroner, sometimes at the scene, but also in the days following.

Upon written request, designated next-of-kin can obtain a copy of the Coroner's investigation statement. It can, however, occasionally take more than eight months for the final report to be compiled and released once all testing has been completed. It is important to know that reading an official Coroner's report may be upsetting or traumatizing for a family. Doing so is a personal choice and the option is available to speak with the Coroner directly to have your questions answered. The Victim Services Unit is able to assist with this process, if and as needed.

The Death Notification

As soon as the next-of-kin are identified, the Officer in Charge (O.I.C.) or their designate will formally notify you of the death of your loved one. In some cases, a member of the Victim Services Unit will also attend to provide emotional and practical assistance.

Next-of-Kin Notification

Once members of the Halton Regional Police Service identify the victim (often done based on evidence at the scene and/or witnesses), family members will be notified. The Halton Regional Police Service recognizes this is a very difficult visit for loved ones and therefore uses all available resources in an effort to best support those family members. This is often done by attending the residence with a member of the Victim Services Unit who is trained in providing immediate support in these situations. If additional family members are identified, the HRPS and the Victim Services Unit may attend those locations, if requested. If next-of-kin reside outside Halton Region, efforts will be made to contact the police service and victim services unit in that jurisdiction.

It is important that the designated next-of-kin is able to make all necessary decisions with respect to their loved one and to relay these decisions to HRPS detectives. Any questions or concerns, as well as follow-up investigation, will be directed to this family member to prevent misinformation and duplication.

Will I Have to Identify the Body?

Yes, you may have to identify your loved one. If the police are unable to make a positive identification, the law requires a family member to do so. If you do not wish to participate or are unable to, another family member or family friend who knew your loved one can do so on your behalf. The identity of your designate will need to be verified by the police, however, before they can identify the body. If you wish to identify the body, you may bring a support person with you or ask that Victim Services accompanies you.

What Happens When I Identify the Body?

A police officer will accompany you to the hospital. A Victim Services representative may also attend, upon request. In an effort to help prepare you, a member of the Coroner's Office will describe the injuries your loved one sustained and ask if you wish to view photographs of the body. You will be able to see the body to identify your loved one. If technology supports it, you may be able to make the formal identification via video monitor rather than in person.

It is important to note that you may not be able to touch the body of your loved one. This is to protect any evidence that may be present from being contaminated or compromised.

What If I Do Not Want an Autopsy?

In cases of a known or suspected death by suicide, the law permits for an autopsy to be performed. It also empowers the Coroner to make the final decision about whether or not one is conducted. If you have any concerns or are opposed to an autopsy for any reason, you are encouraged to share them with the Coroner so they can take them into account when making their decision.

Can I See the Body?

Yes. Once the Pathologist has completed their investigation, your loved one will be transferred to a funeral home, where you will be able to see them. The time frame can vary, depending on the circumstances surrounding your loved one's death.

How Do I Learn the Results of the Autopsy?

Once the autopsy has been completed, the Coroner or the Officer in Charge may be able to

provide you with a preliminary report on the cause of death. Evidence, however, cannot be shared. The toll-free number to enquire about final report is 1-877-991-9959.

Releasing the Body

Once the autopsy is complete, your loved one can usually be released to the funeral home of your choice.

The Funeral

With your loved one now at the funeral home, you may proceed with making funeral plans.

MAKING FUNERAL ARRANGEMENTS

Once the Coroner completes the autopsy (or post-mortem), generally within a few days of the death, your loved one can be released to the funeral home or service provider of your choice. Funeral arrangements can begin to be made when you and your family are ready. A funeral home or crematory service can be identified by searching online or by asking friends and family for recommendations. A trusted spiritual or faith leader may be able to provide options as well. Some families make their selection based on proximity. Once a funeral home has been chosen, you will need to phone them and request an appointment. The Victim Services Unit is available to support you in selecting and contacting a funeral home, if needed.

Topics that may be covered during your meeting with the funeral home include:

- Suitable dates and times for a ceremony
- Clothing choices for your loved one
- A designated charity for memorial donations, if desired
- Financial arrangements. *Please contact the Region of Halton by calling 311 if you believe you will require financial support for a funeral.
- Burial/cremation, visitation, and viewing options
- The type of service you would like (e.g. style of service, religious/non-religious, cultural requests, etc.)

IF YOUR LOVED ONE IS AN INTERNATIONAL STUDENT OR VISITOR TO ONTARIO

Sadly, on occasion, international students or visitors to Ontario die suddenly, and their loved ones require funeral and repatriation information. Repatriation is the process of returning a deceased loved one to their family in their country of origin. In these cases, a local funeral home would typically assist in making these arrangements, which may include air transportation for either cremated or non-cremated remains.

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE – INSURANCE & FUNDING

The financial burden of dealing with the death of a loved one by suicide can be overwhelming. There are, however, a number of potential sources of financial assistance available to you.

Private Insurance

If you have a private insurance plan through your employer or elsewhere, you should first check with your company to confirm if your plan will cover the cost of a funeral.

Financial Assistance

Halton Region: 311

How to Apply: Individuals requiring financial assistance may call Halton Region at 311. Funeral professionals are available to assist individuals who are completing this process alone or those who would like support with their application. The form is available on the Halton Region website for those wishing to complete and submit it on their own.

Website: www.halton.ca/For-Residents/Employment-and-Financial-Assistance

Canada Pension Plan: Canada Death Benefit

In some cases, financial assistance for funerals may be secured through the Death Benefits Plan of the Canada Pension Plan (CPP), but only if the deceased contributed to it. Additional information can be obtained by calling Service Canada's toll-free number at 1-800-454-4051.

Search: Government of Canada Death Benefit

The Canada Pension Plan (CPP) death benefit is a one-time payment. You must be living or have lived in Canada to be eligible for the estate to receive up to \$2,500. Funeral professionals can assist individuals who are completing the process alone or those who would like support with their application. Please note that it may take up to eight weeks for funds to be paid to the estate of the deceased.

Website: www.canada.ca/en/services/benefits/publicpensions/cpp/cpp-death-benefit

ABOUT SUICIDE INVESTIGATIONS

What Can I Expect After the Death?

Once your loved one's case has been assigned to the CIB, a thorough investigation will take place. This includes examining and processing physical evidence, and speaking with witnesses and family members. You can expect to be contacted and interviewed regarding your loved one. This is both standard and necessary. Investigators need to learn all they can about the victim and the circumstances surrounding their sudden death. You may be asked to provide information about your loved one's habits, friends, places they frequent, and/or their personal belongings. At times, the questions may be personal or sensitive. Please be assured that officers are not making judgments about your loved one's behaviour or lifestyle. This information is very important to the investigation and it is information that often only you can provide. In some cases, a parallel investigation may commence if it is believed other individuals may have been involved. While the process of holding those responsible for a loved one's death accountable can be long, challenging, and outcomes uncertain, the Halton Regional Police Service is committed to seeking justice for victims of crimes that are attributable to others, whenever possible.

Why Can't I Be Told All the Facts About the Case?

Depending on the circumstances surrounding the your loved one's death, investigators may not be able to provide details regarding the nature, extent, and/or results of the investigation. This information may be withheld for a variety of necessary reasons, which officers may or may not be able to share with you.

Why Won't the Police Return Government Identification to the Family?

Government identification, such as driver's licences, birth certificates and/or other documents, are the property of the issuing agency and must be returned to them.

What About Releasing Vehicles?

Sometimes vehicles are impounded at the scene and are held as evidence. These vehicles are generally held at an authorized location and may be released after any necessary processing is complete. In these instances, police pay all related costs up until when the family is notified that the vehicle will be released. It is thus important for the family to arrange for the prompt retrieval of the seized vehicle. In some circumstances, the family may opt to surrender the vehicle to the tow company in lieu of paying additional charges. This option should be discussed directly with the tow company.

How Do I Retrieve My Loved One's Property?

Some property and personal effects can be returned rather quickly. Certain items, however, (e.g. clothing) may have been exposed to biological hazards and may have to be safely disposed of. Other items (e.g. cell phones) may need to be retained as evidence and cannot be returned until the investigation has concluded. The Officer in Charge of your loved one's case is responsible for both determining and facilitating the release of their property.

Media

For privacy reasons and out of respect for affected families, media do not typically cover deaths by suicide. Moreover, it is the practice of the Halton Regional Police Service to not release the names of those who have died by suicide. In saying this, media can seek to release the names of deceased individuals in cases such as murder-suicide.

In the exceptionally rare event that a member of the media contacts you regarding the death of your loved one, you are under absolutely no obligation to speak with them or to provide comment. It is highly recommended that you be cautious in your dealings with media without first consulting the Officer in Charge as doing so could impact HRPS' investigation. The Officer in Charge will then coordinate with the media through proper channels.

It is important to reiterate that there is absolutely no requirement, nor obligation, for you and/or your family to speak to any media who may reach out to you during this difficult time. Please contact police if you are ever concerned about your safety/security when it comes to the media.

While it is the practice of the Halton Regional Police Service to not release the names of those who die by suicide, the Service may not be able to prevent your loved one's name from becoming known to the media, particularly if sensitive information has been posted to individual social internet sites. This is beyond the control of the Service.

Unfortunately, anyone can post images or text to social media sites, some of which may be very difficult to see or read. If you or your family encounter sensitive information or photographs on social media that you find hurtful or offensive, please contact the Criminal Investigations Bureau Unit or the Victim Services Unit. While we cannot stop people from posting information and personal opinions, we will do our best to mitigate harm to you and your family.

If you have any questions or require guidance, please contact our Media Relations Office at 905-825-4899.

Misconceptions

1. Don't "investigate the investigation".

When a loved one dies, it is natural to expect that your case should take priority and be investigated quickly. Officers strive to ensure they conduct the very best investigations they can, and sometimes that means taking longer than they would like. When this happens, it can sometimes lead families to want to conduct their own investigation. It is important to note that a suicide investigation is not just about establishing a theory about what happened; it is about the evidence. Allowing the police to conduct their investigation without interference helps to ensure that they have the ability to gather all of the facts, even though it may be difficult.

2. Don't play the "blame game".

It is a common to be angry following the death of a loved one by suicide. When this happens, family members can sometimes rush to judgment in an effort to hold someone accountable for causing so much pain and loss. It is important to step back and allow the police to conduct their investigation, to take the necessary time to gather evidence, to interview witnesses, and to present facts that may help you better understand how and, in some cases, why your loved one died.

3. Television is not reality.

While television provides us with entertainment, it is important to remember that it does not always reflect reality, particularly as it relates to policing and investigations.

Facts About Suicide

According to the Public Health Agency of Canada, an average of ten people die by suicide each day, making it the country's ninth leading cause of death. Of the approximately 4,000 individuals who die by suicide each year, more than 90% were living with a mental health condition. Approximately 70 to 75% of those who die by suicide are men.

Suicide is the second-leading cause of death in children and youth between the ages of ten and 19 years old, along with young adults aged 20 to 29. It is the third-leading cause of death for adults between the ages of 30 and 44. Death by suicide is also prevalent among older populations aged 45 to 65+.

It is important to note that for every death by suicide, there are about 25 to 30 attempts. This means that suicide prevention, along with awareness and destigmatization, are crucial.

GRIEF AFTER SUICIDE

A Different Kind of Grief

The family and friends of a person who dies by suicide feel the emotions that their death can bring. Adding to the suffering is shock over the sudden, often unexpected death. Loved ones may feel isolated and judged by friends, colleagues, and others. Some compare the emotional stress to being trapped on an endless roller-coaster.

What Loved Ones Should Know

- You are not alone. Approximately 1 in 4 people know someone who has died by suicide.
- Ultimately, suicide was the decision of the person who died
- It is believed that the majority of deaths by suicide are the result of untreated depression or other mental illness(es)

Common Experiences/Feelings

- Shock – numbness, disbelief
- Denial – sense of impossibility
- Sadness – feelings of being overwhelmed
- Panic – fear of the future, uncertainty
- Loneliness – emptiness, feeling displaced
- Anger – due to lack of support, inadequate medical care, with the deceased for leaving you
- Betrayal, abandonment
- Confusion – memory loss, inability to concentrate
- Guilt – things you wish you had said or done
- Shame, blame
- Disconnection from your loved one because they have chosen to die
- A deep need to find the meaning of and reasons for the suicide
- An exaggerated sense of responsibility for the death
- Acceptance – that the tragic event could not have been prevented and cannot be changed

Telling Others – What to Say

Explaining Suicide to Children and Teens

Be honest. Children and teens need to know that their loved one died by suicide. It may be hard to say it but it is the truth, and it is better that they hear it from someone close to them. It is important to know that if you do not have an open and honest conversation with children and teens, it is very likely that they will learn the details from someone else, and this will undoubtedly add to their pain. Concealing what happened can also lead to feelings of mistrust, fear, and loneliness.

In saying this, children and teens may not need to know the specifics. Children, for instance, may ask, “Why?” This is a difficult question because the only person who can answer it is person who died. When speaking to children, be sure to keep the explanation age appropriate. For example, a younger child can be told, “He didn’t want to live anymore. He felt sad and hopeless and forgot that he could get help.”

Be sure to keep your answers simple and short. Children and teens will tell you what they want to know, and you only need to answer what they ask you. You may not be able to answer all of their questions, but you can reassure them that nothing they said or did could have prevented their loved one from dying. It is important to comfort them and to let them know that the deceased person is still loved. Remind them that when they feel sad, it is important for them to talk to someone and ask for help.

RESOURCES FOR CHILDREN AND TEENS

Lighthouse for Grieving Children & Families

Lighthouse offers children, youth, and their families free grief support and an opportunity to connect with others on a similar journey. Lighthouse is an understanding community and helps families at their most vulnerable. The agency provides consultations, support groups, education, and training to children, youth, and parents/caregivers.

Contact:

Serves Halton residents and surrounding areas
Location: 2522 Rebecca Street, Oakville, ON L6L 6N8
Phone: 905-337-2333
Email: info@lighthousegriefsupport.org
Website: lighthousegriefsupport.org

ROCK - Reach Out Centre for Kids

ROCK has been designated as the lead child and youth mental health agency for Halton Region by the Ministry of Child and Youth Services (MCYS). With programs and services that run out of 11 sites and three main offices, ROCK offers a number of valuable mental health supports to those requiring them.

Contact:

Serves Halton residents and surrounding areas. Has locations throughout the region.
Location: 471 Pearl Street, Burlington, ON L7R 4M4
Phone: 905-878-9785 (Crisis line, 24/7)
Phone: 289-266-0036 (Access & System Navigation, Monday-Friday 9am-5pm)
Website: rockonline.ca

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION FOR PARENTS/LOVED ONES

Grieve Openly

It is okay for young people to see you when you are angry, feel helplessness, or are confused. This helps to ensure that they do not take ownership or responsibility for your feelings. In saying this, those around you need to know it is not their job to make things better for you or others. Reassure children and teens that you are there for them and are still able to take care of them.

Listen and Reassure

Children and teens may be confused when they are told that death of their loved one was a suicide. They may ask many questions as they try to make sense of the news, “Didn’t he love us?”, “Why was he so sad?”, or “Why wasn’t I enough?”

Answer each as best as you can. Tell them that while you do not have all the answers, you are always there to listen. Encourage them to talk openly about their feelings.

Young people will often need plenty of reassurance that the suicide was not their fault and that there are always alternatives, so that they don’t come to view it as a response to problems or challenges.

Seek Help

As noted, children and teens often need a lot of support and comfort when a loved one dies. You may find it difficult to support or reassure them when you are also in the early stages of grieving. You may find there are times when they might benefit from talking to someone else, such as a family friend, a counsellor, or a support group.

Words of Affirmation – The Survivor of Suicide Loss’ Bill of Rights

- I have the right to be free of guilt
- I have the right to not feel responsible for the death
- I have the right to express my feelings and emotions
- I have the right to have my questions answered honestly by authorities and family members
- I have the right not to be deceived because others feel they can spare me further grief
- I have the right to retain my individuality and not be judged because of the death
- I have the right to seek counselling and support groups to enable me to explore my feelings honestly to further the acceptance process
- I have the right to reach acceptance
- I have the right to a new beginning

RESOURCES FOR FAMILIES

Heartache2Hope

Heartache2Hope offers support to survivors of suicide loss in Halton and the surrounding areas. Their goal is to break the silence of suicide loss and to meet the unique needs of individuals who have experienced the death of a loved one by suicide through grief programs, public awareness education, and specialized training to community organizations.

Contact:

Unit 11, 1155 North Service Road West, Oakville, ON L6M 3E3

Phone: 905-599-4673 (Monday-Friday 9am-6pm; Saturday 10am-2pm)

Phone: 289-474-5508 (HOPELINE, Monday and Thursday 1pm-4pm)

Email: info@heartache2hope.com

Website: heartache2hope.com

Centre for Grief and Healing – Bereaved Families of Ontario

Eight-week bereavement support groups for spouses, parents, young adults, and adults. Provides grief counselling, individual support sessions, child and teen programs, and adult and group programs.

Participants are self-referred and must complete an intake form prior to attending first session.

Contact:

Locations throughout Halton and Peel

Phone: 905-848-4337

Email: info@bereavedfamilies.ca

Website: bereavedfamilies.ca

COPING MECHANISMS

- Give yourself permission to grieve and to accept the reality of your loss. Allow yourself to cry, get angry, sleep, eat or to do whatever you need to without going to extreme
- Be patient with the process – there is no “normal” timeline for feeling better
- Get plenty of rest – your body needs to recover from the stress
- Reach out for help – do not be afraid to ask for support through family members, friends, doctors, clergy, funeral director, and/or counsellor

Self-Care After Witnessing or Responding to a Death by Suicide

Feelings of trauma and grief are normal responses to abnormal events. It is important to not fight or block these emotions, even if they are uncomfortable. Reoccurring thoughts, dreams, and flashbacks are also normal, and they usually decrease and become less painful or upsetting over time.

Self-care and support can help this process. Examples may include:

- De-briefing
- Maintaining your daily routines
- Continuing to use or increasing use of existing self-care activities (e.g. meditation, journaling, relaxation exercises, listening to music, etc.)
- Being active
- Seeking support or help from others
- Eating regularly
- Trying to rest or sleep
- Learning what works best for you and listening to your body

Reminder:

Have you provided your updated contact information to the Officer in Charge and your VSU worker? For more information, please contact:

Victim Services Unit
Halton Regional Police Service
95 Oak Walk Drive
Oakville, Ontario
L6H 0G6

Telephone(s): 905-825-4747 ext. 5239 / 905-825-4810 / 905-825-4805

Website: www.haltonpolice.ca/en/services-and-reporting/victim-services.aspx

MY CONTACTS

Victim Services Unit Crisis Responder(s)	
Name(s):	Position: Crisis Responder
Business Phone: 905-825-4777 ext. 5239	E-mail(s):
Office Location: 95 Oak Walk Drive Oakville, Ontario L6H 0G6	Notes:

Criminal Investigations Bureau Officer in Charge	
Name:	Position:
Business Phone:	Cell Phone:
Email:	Office Location:
HRPS Occurrence Number:	

WHEN AND HOW TO GET HELP

If you or someone you know is in immediate danger, dial 9-1-1. If you or someone you know is struggling with suicidal thoughts or ideations:

- Call or text the ***Suicide Crisis Helpline*** at 9-8-8
- The ***Crisis Outreach and Support Team (COAST)*** 24-hour, seven days a week crisis line at 1-877-825-9011
- ***Kids Help Phone*** for youth and young adults aged five to 30 at 1-800-668-6868
- The ***Hope for Wellness*** Helpline, available to all Indigenous People across Canada, at 1-855-242-3310.

If you or someone you know is thinking or talking about suicide or death, or has a plan to end their life, it is vital to seek help without delay. Know that asking someone if they are thinking about suicide will not increase the risk of them acting but is a necessary conversation to have. Suicide is the result of a number of complex factors that vary from person to person. It is important to know the signs and behaviours that suggest someone may need help.

Know the Signs

- Talking about suicide — making statements such as, “I’m going to kill myself,” “I wish I were dead”, or “I wish I had never been born”
- Obtaining the means to take your or their own life, such as buying a weapon or stockpiling pills
- Withdrawing from social contact and wanting to be left alone
- Abrupt mood changes, being emotionally high one day and deeply discouraged the next
- Being preoccupied with death, dying, or violence
- Feeling trapped or hopeless about a situation
- Increased use of alcohol and/or drugs
- Changes in normal routine, including eating or sleeping patterns
- Engaging in risky or self-destructive behaviours, such as using drugs or driving recklessly
- Giving away belongings or getting affairs in order when there is no pressing reason or logical explanation for doing so
- Saying goodbye to people as if you or they won’t be seen again
- Developing personality changes or being severely anxious or agitated, particularly when experiencing any or all of the warning signs listed above

MYTHS SURROUNDING SUICIDE

1. **People who talk about dying by suicide, don't**

Those who die by suicide often make their ideations, feelings, and/or intentions known. While this does not necessarily mean that their suicide could have been prevented, anyone who threatens or talks about suicide should be taken seriously and urged to seek professional help as soon as possible.

2. **If there was no note, then it couldn't have been suicide.**

Only about 25% of people who die by suicide leave a note. The absence of a note does not indicate a suicide, nor does the presence of one reflect the thoughts of a rational mind.

3. **People who attempt suicide will not try it again.**

Between 10-20% of people who attempt suicide repeat within one year. Many of those who die by suicide have made prior attempts, sometimes several. These attempts may take the form of reckless behavior that is not recognized as suicidal.

4. **Once the crisis has passed, the person is out of danger.**

Many suicides, for which there was a prior attempt/crisis, occur during periods of perceived improvement in the person's mood and/or state of mind. It is theorized that this is because the individual has regained the energy to act on their suicidal ideations.

5. **Suicide can be largely explained by genetics.**

If you or someone you know comes from a family where someone has died by suicide, you or they are at greater risk of suicide than the average person. Possible explanations include the example set by the relative, inherited additional factors, and/or the normalization of suicide within the family.

HOW TO HELP SOMEONE IN EMOTIONAL DISTRESS

Talking openly and safely about suicide can help you determine if someone you know needs help. You can support an individual experiencing emotional distress by:

- Connecting them with a crisis line, counsellor, or a trusted person
- Letting them know that you care
- Listening and showing concern
- Talking with them, assuring them that they are not alone and you are here to help

Important: An individual who actively contemplating suicide is in crisis and needs immediate, professional support. Dial 9-1-1 and/or refer to the list of agencies provided on page 23 of this Guide.

SUPPORT FOR THOSE WHO HAVE ATTEMPTED SUICIDE AND THEIR LOVED ONES

9-8-8 Suicide Crisis Helpline

If you or someone you know is feeling hopeless and/or are struggling to cope, or if you or someone you know is dealing with thoughts of suicide, text or dial 9-8-8.

What to expect:

A trained responder will listen without judgment, offer support and understanding, and share helpful resources. They can also inspire hope, facilitate recovery, and save lives by connecting to an individual's strengths, and helping them find new ways to cope, live, and thrive.

CMHA – Canadian Mental Health Association, Halton Region Branch

CMHA provides support for those experiencing mental health issues and addiction through education programs, free telephone counselling, crisis intervention through the Crisis Outreach and Support Team (COAST), and peer-support programs.

Contact:

Locations throughout Halton

Phone: 905-693-4270 / Toll-free: 1-877-693-4270

COAST Phone: 1-877-825-9011

COAST Hours: 24-hour, seven days a week

Email: info@cmhahrb.ca

Website: halton.cmha.ca

ConnexOntario

Offers free, confidential, 24/7 live-answer information and referrals for individuals experiencing alcohol and drug dependency, mental illness, and/or gambling. ConnexOntario is funded by the Government of Canada, and aims to bridge the gap between available services and the people who need them.

Contact:

ConnexOntario accepts clientele via telephone, email, and web chat (on the website)

Phone: 1-866-531-2600

Website: connexontario.ca

Mind Your Mind

Mind Your Mind exists in the space where mental health, wellness, engagement, and technology meet. It works with young people aged 14 to 29 to co-create interactive tools and innovative resources to help build capacity and strengthen resilience.

Young people work directly with facilitators, content experts, and designers to brainstorm, design, and develop their projects. Their goals are to promote wellness, reduce the stigma around mental health, and increase access to professional and peer-based community supports. The platform offers a variety of educational, informative, and helpful resources to anyone who can benefit from anything mental health-related.

Website: mindyourmind.ca

SERVICES IN THE GTA

CAMH – Centre for Addiction and Mental Health

CAMH is Canada's largest mental health teaching hospital, and one of the world's leading research centres. It is fully affiliated with the University of Toronto, and consists of physicians, clinicians, researchers, educators, and support staff who provide clinical care to patients. CAMH conducts research, provides expert training to health care professionals and scientists, develops innovative health promotion and prevention strategies, and advocates on public policy issues at all levels of government. It offers a wide range of clinical care services such as assessment, brief interventions, in-patient programs, day hospital services, continuing care, outpatient services, and family support.

Contact:

Locations in Toronto and the GTA

Phone: 416-535-8501 / Toll-free: 1-800-463-2338

Hours: Monday-Friday 8:30am-5pm

Website: camh.ca

SERVICES FOR INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES IN THE GTA

Native Child and Family Services Toronto

Urban residential Healing Lodge for Indigenous women and young children. Guided by sacred knowledge that culture is healing and focuses on wellness centred in culture.

Contact:

30 College Street, Toronto

Phone: 416-969-8510

Email: info@nativechild.org

Website: nativechild.org

Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres (OFIFC)

Aims to improve the quality of life for Indigenous people living in an urban environment. Provides culturally appropriate services in urban communities to help support Indigenous Peoples. Offers various health, mental health, and wellness programs.

Contact:

219 Front Street East Toronto, ON M5A 1E8

Phone: 1-800-772-9291, 416-956-7575

Email: offic@offic.org

Website: ofifc.org

Hope for Wellness Hotline

The Hope for Wellness Helpline is available to all Indigenous People across Canada. Experienced and culturally competent counsellors are reachable by telephone and online 'chat', 24 hours a day, seven days a week. When you call the Hope for Wellness Helpline, you will speak with a knowledgeable professional who will listen, discuss support, and suggest resources.

Contact:

Phone: 1-855-242-3310

Website: hopeforwellness.ca

ACTIVE PROJECTS – GOVERNMENT OF CANADA

The Public Health Agency of Canada is funded by The Government of Canada. It is currently working with a number of organizations across the country on projects that address a wide range of suicide prevention and mental health-related issues that can lead to suicide.

Bringing “9-8-8” to Canada

On November 30, 2023, the Government of Canada launched a national three-digit number, 9-8-8, to help prevent death by suicide and to support those experiencing emotional distress. The free service is delivered by the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, CAMH, and is available by telephone and text, 24 hours a day, seven days a week, in English and French. The offering is trauma-informed, culturally appropriate, and available to anyone in Canada. It builds on the current Talk Suicide Canada model, where existing distress and crisis services across the country form the 9-8-8 responder network.

The Federal Framework for Suicide Prevention

Working together to prevent suicide in Canada, the legislated elements of the Act focus on reducing stigma and raising public awareness as well as connecting Canadians with information and resources, and accelerating the use of research and innovation in suicide prevention. The Act became law in 2012 and expands upon Bill C-300, emphasizing that suicide is a health and safety priority that is both a mental health and a public health issue. As the designated entity, the Public Health Agency of Canada is expected to report on progress related to the Framework every two years. The legislated elements for action covered under the Act include providing guidelines to improve public awareness and knowledge of suicide, disseminating information about suicide and its prevention, making existing statistics about suicide and related risk factors publicly available, promoting collaboration and knowledge exchange across domains, sectors, regions, and jurisdictions, defining best practices for suicide prevention, and promoting the use of research and evidence-based practices for suicide prevention.