



Suicide awareness

The 67th NALC national convention is now history. I was honored to be elected the new director of health benefits at the convention. I would like to thank the membership for giving me the opportunity to serve you during the upcoming term of office. I look forward to working with all of you in dealing with the challenges of the future.

The Employee Assistance Program (EAP) workshop during the convention was well attended and disseminated valuable information. Magellan Health Services Director Art Barker and local staff did a wonderful job of presenting information on suicide awareness, and the following is a follow-up, as requested by the delegates who attended. This program also was attended by your newly elected director of safety and health, Manuel Peralta, who has already started to provide information and to use his knowledge to help promote safety and health.

Facts to know about suicide

- More than 90 percent of suicides are associated with a mental disorder.
- The strongest risk factors for suicide are depression, alcohol abuse, cocaine use and separation or divorce.
- The suicide rate is highest among adults 65 or older, especially Caucasian males.
- The suicide rate among persons under 25 years of age has increased dramatically.

Common warning signs

- Withdrawal and isolation from family and friends
- Obtaining a weapon when depressed
- Giving away prized possessions
- Often talking about death
- Hoarding medications
- Making statements like, "There's nothing left to live for"

Common causes for feeling suicidal

The leading cause for feeling suicidal is clinical depression. Another may be any situation that leads a person to feel hopeless, as when a person suffers significant losses or disappointment and sees no hope for improvement.

Studies have demonstrated that individuals diagnosed with the following are at the highest risk for suicide:

- Depression
- Alcohol and substance abuse

- Schizophrenia
- Borderline personality disorder

What should I do if I think I'm suicidal?

1. Get help immediately—Call the toll-free number on your insurance card for help in choosing a health care provider. If it's an emergency, get help from family or friends. Call 911 if no family or friends are available.

2. Talk with a health care provider—Arrange an exam with a primary care physician or a mental health professional.

3. Get rid of any weapons.

4. Remain actively involved in your treatment—Tell your provider about any changes in your mood. Share any concerns about your care. Immediately tell your provider about thoughts of hurting yourself.

5. Learn more about suicide—Your doctor or your local mental health association can suggest reading materials on depression or suicide. They can also advise you of local support groups. Information about suicide can also be found online at:

- American Association of Suicidology (suicidology.org)
- Centers For Disease Control and Prevention (cdc.gov/safeusa/suicide.htm)
- Depression Central (psyc.com.net)
- National Alliance for the Mentally Ill (nami.org)
- National Mental Health Association (nmha.org)

What should I do if someone else is suicidal?

- Be a good listener. Let the person know you are available and concerned.
- Familiarize yourself with suicide intervention resources. Information is often found on the front of the local yellow pages.
- Encourage your family member or friend to get treatment and to stay in treatment.
- Get rid of all weapons.

Resources are available

Additional information, self-help tools and other resources are available at eap4you.com. Or call EAP for more information, help and support. Counselors are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week to provide confidential assistance at no cost to you. The phone numbers are: 800-EAP-4-YOU (800-327-4968) and TTY 877-492-7341. ✉