SAVING OLDER ADULT LIVES IN TENNESSEE

WHAT TO DO

• Take the risk factors and signals seriously. If you think someone is considering suicide, ASK HIM OR HER “Are you suicidal?” or “Do you want to kill yourself?” If the answer is “yes,” GET HELP.

• Show interest in the person and be supportive of him or her.

• Offer hope that there are alternatives to suicide.

• Take action. Remove methods the person might use to kill him or herself.

• Seek help from his or her family, friend, physician, clergy, etc.

• IMMEDIATELY contact a person or organization that specializes in crisis intervention or suicide prevention for help. (See the back of this brochure).

WHAT TO AVOID

• Avoid acting shocked or lecturing the person on the value of life.

• Avoid taunting or daring him or her to “do it.”

• Avoid judging. Allow him or her to express his or her thoughts or feelings.

• Avoid debates over whether suicide is right or wrong.

• Avoid offering easy reassurance—it may make the person feel as if you really don’t understand or care about him or her.

• Don’t keep yours or another person’s suicidal thoughts a secret. GET HELP.

WHERE TO GET HELP

If you or someone you know is thinking about suicide, call 1-800-273-TALK (8255).
The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline will automatically connect you with a certified local crisis center 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Get the TSPN App:
Available on Apple and Android

www.tspn.org

615-297-1077 • www.tspn.org

Suicide Prevention TEXT LINE
www.crisistextline.org

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For many people, the later years are a time to relax and enjoy life. For some older adults, however, physical or emotional pain prevents them from finding fulfillment. If their pain is not addressed, they may eventually consider taking their own life.

Tragically, Tennessee loses one member of its aging population to suicide every two days. Tennesseans over the age of 65 have suicide rate higher than youth aged 10-24. Studies on suicide among older adults have found that:

- Older men are four times as likely to take their own lives as older women.
- Older Caucasians are more likely to die by suicide than are members of minority communities.
- Suicide deaths are more likely among older residents of rural areas than those who live in urban areas.
- Older Tennesseans are most likely to use firearms to carry out their suicide plans. Since older people do not usually take their own lives on impulse, there are opportunities for them to get the help they need. Noticing and caring about a suicidal older adult can make the difference between life and death.

There are some behaviors that signal possible suicidal thoughts or actions by an older person. Knowing these signals and taking actions may help you save someone’s life. A person might be suicidal if they:

- Have sadness or depression that will not go away.
- Become withdrawn or isolate themselves from family and friends.
- Give away prized possessions.
- Increase their use of alcohol or drugs.
- Acquire a firearm.
- Lose weight or have a decrease in appetite.
- Change their sleeping pattern.
- Are prone to accidents, especially to falls.
- Talk about or threaten suicide. (If this happens, TAKE IMMEDIATE ACTION).

Any one of these signals alone doesn’t necessarily indicate a person is suicidal. However, several signals may be cause for concern. Signals are especially important if the person has attempted suicide in the past. Listen. Be a friend. Get professional help. Your actions may save a life!