

Five Minutes Can Save a Life: A Three-Step Intervention to Use With Parents and Caretakers of Suicidal Individuals

This is a very important intervention. It is as sensible as taking the car keys away from an intoxicated individual. It may very well mean the difference between life and death for an individual who is feeling suicidal.

1. **Inform the parents or caretakers that the person of concern is at risk for suicide and why you think so.** For example, if you have interacted with an individual who seems suicidal, has expressed intent to suicide, or has a plan for completing suicide, it is important to share your observations and concerns with the individual's parent or caretaker.

2. **Tell parents or caretakers that they can reduce the risk of suicide by removing firearms and other lethal means from the house.** Speak to the parent or caretaker separately from the person of concern to avoid calling his or her attention to the means of suicide. Research shows that the risk of suicide doubles if a firearm is in the house, even if the firearm is locked up. It is extremely important to help parents or caretakers understand the importance of removing access to firearms and other lethal means. Most suicide deaths in Oregon are completed with a firearm. This is important information for parents and caretakers, even if they do not own a firearm. Be aware that access to lethal means may be readily available at the home of other family members, friends, or neighbors. Every effort must be made to remove all access to lethal means.

3. **Educate parents and caretakers about different ways to dispose of, or at the very least, limit access to a firearm.** Officers from local police departments, sheriff's offices, or state police are willing to discuss the best means to secure or dispose of a firearm. If the parent or caretaker does not want to involve law enforcement to secure or dispose of a firearm, removal of firearms from the house and storage in a secure setting elsewhere is advised.

