

**SARNIA LAMBTON
SUICIDE PROTOCOL
RESOURCE
MARCH 2021**

SARNIA LAMBTON SUICIDE PREVENTION COMMITTEE



www.sarnialambtonsuicideprevention.com
slsuicideprevention@gmail.com

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Sarnia Lambton Suicide Protocol

Community Resource

A large network of Community Agencies and organizations have participated in the development of this community suicide resource document for individuals, families, organizations and all interested parties. The intent of the resource is to provide consistent information that will help people of all ages navigate the mental health system and other community supports, particularly as it relates to suicide in Lambton County.

Information to support those at risk, those who have attempted suicide and also those who have experienced a loss by suicide is provided.

The goal of this resource is to build a suicide safer community that values good mental health and also promotes ongoing access to mental health supports.

Reaching Out for Help

It can be very hard to talk about suicide because of the stigma and taboos that once portrayed suicidal thoughts and behaviour as a moral failings rather than a state of pain the person is experiencing.

Please note there are many services available and there are no costs. If there are barriers, such as transportation, child care or others things, please let the support person or organization know, they can help problem solve those issues.

If you are struggling:

If you are struggling with thoughts of suicide, **reach out** to one of the many resources listed. There are many 24/7 services available if you need to talk with someone immediately and there are also many other services available for support. A list of resources follows in the next section, it is not easy to talk about these thoughts but it is very clear from persons with lived experience and in other current research that reaching out can truly help a person find hope.

If you know someone who is struggling:

If someone tells you, in any way (words/actions/thoughts), that the person is having suicidal thoughts, it is important to ask them directly about what is happening. Use the actual words; "Are you thinking about suicide?" Tell them you are there for them and that you will help them to find support.

Do not promise secrecy, but you can offer discretion and sensitivity. Help them make a phone call or find a chat; some place they are most likely to be comfortable. Follow up and ensure they are connected in some way.

Offer to go with them if you can. If you cannot, then find another resource that can do this. You can call a distress line to get advice about how to help this person.

Mental Health Resources

Taking the first step to get help is tough. The following list provides many resources in the County of Lambton. **Reach out** until you find the help you need.

Emergency Resources

Emergency Services – 911 - Call if in immediate danger or in need of urgent medical help.

Bluewater Health - 89 Norman St, Sarnia - 519-464-4400

Charlotte Englehart Hospital of Petrolia – 519-882-4325

Canadian Mental Health Association - First Response

1-800-307-4319 (Sarnia and Lambton Kent) available 24/7

Distress Line - 519-336-3000, available 24/7

Child & Youth Crisis Line – 1-888-622-1320

Online Resources

www.eriestclairhealthline.ca (local resources)

Connex - 1-866-531-2600

www.mentalhealthhelpline.ca

Bounce Back - www.bouncebackontario.ca

Kids Help Phone - www.kidshelpphone.ca

Call 1-800-668 6868 or text 686868

Good2Talk - 1 800 925-5454 or www.good2talk.ca

Wellness Together Canada — www.ca.portal.gs or

Youth - text Wellness to 686868

Adults text Wellness to 741741

First Nations and Inuit Hope for Wellness Help Line

1 800 242 3310 or www.hopeforwellness.ca

Lambton Health Unit — www.mindsconnected.ca

211 Ontario - www.211ontario.ca - Find services and programs in your community.

Valuable Local Help Connections

Canadian Mental Health Association — 519-337-5411

Family Counselling Centre - 519-336-0120 - Provides professional counselling, support and prevention programs, also distress line and tel-check.

St Clair Child & Youth Services — 519 337-3701 - Serving children, youth, and families.

Sarnia Lambton Rebound (Youth Program)— 519 344-2841

Sexual Assault Survivors Centre — 519 337-3320

Women's Interval Home — 519 336-5200

School Mental Health Ontario — www.smho-smso.ca

Lambton Mental Wellness - 519-344-5602 - Provides support for clients and families.

Aamjiwnaang First Nation Health Centre - 519 332-6770

North Lambton Community Health Centre - www.nlchc.com

Victim Services of Sarnia Lambton – 519-433-8861, ext. 5238 - www.victimservices.on.ca

Mental Health and Addiction Nurse – Home and Community Care Support Services, Erie St. Clair – <http://healthcareathome.ca/eriestclair/en/Getting-Care/Getting-Care-at-Home/specialized-nursing-care/mental-health-and-addictions-nurses>

Grief Resources in Sarnia Lambton

Suicide Loss and Support Group at Rapids Family Health Team — 519-339-8949

St. Joseph's Hospice Sarnia Lambton - 519-337-0537

Sarnia Lambton Suicide Prevention Committee - Resources, advocacy and education — www.slsuicideprevention.ca

Grief Support online and text Chat service- Dr. Bob Kemp, Hospice

Text 289-278-1885 or visit www.kemphospice.org/ Support-line is available 10am-10pm - cost is free

How Do I Know If Someone is Suicidal?

Suicide is a complex issue. Anyone can have thoughts of suicide. All ages and individuals may struggle. At least 1 in 20 people may struggle with thoughts of suicide. Most suicidal people do not want to die. They are experiencing severe emotional pain and are desperate for the pain to go away. They have lost hope.

A suicidal person is someone who is in pain and who wants to make the pain go away. Emotional or mental pain make it difficult to think clearly.

The desire is for pain to go away, combined with risky behaviours, increase the risk of suicide. Ask the person about suicide and take all suicidal thoughts seriously.

What are the factors that may lead someone to thoughts of suicide?

- A serious physical or mental illness
- Problems with addictions
- A major loss such as the death of a loved one, relationship or economic/social security
- Major life changes or transitions
- Social isolation or lack of a support network
- Family or relational violence
- Trauma
- Access to the means for suicidal acts

Serious Signs of Suicidal Behaviour

- Talk, threats, writing about death, dying and suicide
- Looking for or referencing ways to kill oneself
- Talking or writing (including social media) about death, dying or suicide

Other Signs to Consider:

- Increase substance use
- Feelings or expressions of helplessness or hopelessness; no purpose in life
- Anxiety, agitation, anger
- Withdrawal from others
- Sleeping/eating disturbances — too much/too little
- Engaging in risky behaviours
- Dramatic mood changes

The best way to find out if a person is suicidal is to ask them directly. Asking about suicide will not give them the idea to kill themselves; it shows someone cares and is concerned about their well-being.

How Do I Support Someone Who is Suicidal?

Say something — Don't be afraid of being clumsy!

Be patient, compassionate and non-judgmental.

Ask them how they are feeling and if they are thinking about suicide.

Really listen! Tell them this important and give 100% of your attention.

Be sensitive but direct.

Let them know you are concerned and explain why.

Never swear secrecy, as you may need more help.

"I care about you and want to make sure you stay safe."

"You seem so sad. What is going on?"

"Are you thinking of killing yourself? How would you do it"

Find out what to do (check resources, and call for help and support)

If there is a life-threatening situation or imminent harm seek emergency help, call 911 or go to the hospital.

Call your local crisis line.

Stay calm and listen.

Talk with the person about the warning signs you have observed.

Be sensitive.

Educate yourself about local resources/services.

Connect person to services (see List on Page 4/5)

Involve and engage other supports where appropriate.

Self-care is very important, especially when helping others.

What Happens at the Hospital and with Emergency Services?

If a person has threatened suicide and is at immediate risk (has taken an action that will harm them or has a means immediately available to them), it is appropriate and necessary to take them immediately to the hospital emergency department or call 911.

If you are able to get the person to the hospital, there may be a wait time until they can be assessed by staff that will do a risk assessment. The person may be admitted or may not. In both cases, follow up resources will be offered.

Ask questions so follow up steps are clear. The circumstances can be overwhelming and very stressful, so it is important to have contacts to help in moving forward. There are resources in the community that do transitional planning with the hospital for both youth and adults.

Locally, St. Clair Child and Youth Services and Canadian Mental Health Association have ongoing programs with the hospital to facilitate planning for someone at risk. There are Mental Health nurses in the school system that can assist with planning for students' needs.

At the hospital, you may encounter doctors, nurses (including crisis nurses) and social workers who will guide the assessment and planning.

If a 911 call is necessary, police and emergency medical responders will attend where the person is. There will be transportation to the hospital emergency department where an assessment will occur.

If a death by suicide does occur, through the Victim Quick Response Program, Victim Services of Sarnia-Lambton may fund Tragic Circumstance Assistance to assist with the cost of cleanup in the immediate aftermath of a suicide.

Victim Services will support victims of crime or tragic circumstances (including family and witnesses). They will offer emotional and practical supports, crisis intervention and referral for long term supports.

As well, the VQRP (Victim Quick Response Program) may provide financial assistance for essential expenses, counselling and other related needs.

Dealing with Grief

All grief journeys are unique. You do not "just get over it".

The grieving process may be complicated by the inexplicable nature of suicide itself. The stigma (historical and cultural taboos) connected to suicide can create specific issues in grieving. How do you talk about it with others? How will they react?

Emotional reactions to a suicide can be intense. Any death is a painful experience, regardless of the circumstances. A death by suicide may be traumatic and can leave someone feeling very overwhelmed and unable to cope.

Grief will vary with developmental stages of life. Children and teens will have specific types of reactions that will vary from adults. Support and counselling should be suitable to the age of the child or teen. After the initial crisis phase, grief will unfold in many different ways, places and times.

Be aware of your feelings and others. **Reach out** at any time you may need support.

General reactions to a death by suicide may include:

Shock and emotional numbing

Deep sadness

Anger and blame

Guilt, shame, denial

Why?

Fear

Depression, anxiety

Memory/concentration difficulties

Flashbacks

Increased suicidal risk

Reaching out for help and support

There is hope after suicide. Seek out individual counselling, support groups, family and friends

What do I tell family, friends and community?

It can be very challenging to tell others about a death of a loved one by suicide. Though difficult, telling family and friends the truth is important. It helps with your own grief and the shared grief in your close circle (CAMH, 2017). Try to find someone who can help you tell others. Writing down a brief statement that tells about the person's death and also about your needs at the time might be helpful.

"They died by suicide. I am not ready to talk about it yet"

There may be a number of other people and groups (schools, workplaces, doctors, social groups) who will need to be informed. Disclosing details is up to the family. Seek help from someone who you can support you and help with this very difficult task.

Self-Care While Grieving

Grieving takes energy, so forgive yourself when you simply can't do the things you think you "should" do. In the beginning, your grief journey may use up all the energy you need just to get through the day, especially if you have to care for others or deal with some of the practical matters related to the death.

- Make time for yourself. Use your alone time to think, plan, meditate, pray, journal, remember and mourn.
- Surround yourself with safe people and safe places to support you on this difficult journey.
- Accept help. Do not be afraid to tell people what you need. Often, people will not know what to say or how to help unless they are told directly. For example, you could suggest tasks (such as mowing the lawn, shopping or going for a walk with you).
- Whatever you do, make sure it feels right to you (and is safe) (from CAMH - Centre for Addiction and Mental Health - camh.ca)

There is most often a ripple effect when someone dies and this can be very challenging if a person has died by suicide. The person may have been connected to many different groups including a workplace or a school. Helping other community members, including peers, coworkers, classmates, other group members and the community at large is an important consideration. In addition to individual counselling supports, other protocols have been developed in the community through the school boards, Canadian Mental Health Association and St. Clair Child and Youth Services that are available to support families and individuals.

Self Care

If someone is very stressed or in crisis, especially if a loved one is struggling with suicide, family and friends may experience intense feelings and need extra care and attention.

Some possible feelings:

Alone - Reach out for help and support from family, friends, professionals or support groups.

Guilt/Blame - There is rarely just one reason for someone's distress. Blaming yourself or others is not useful. Focus on ways of getting help.

Anger - Feeling powerless about a crisis might make you feel angry. A healthy way to communicate these strong feelings is to make it clear that you will do everything you can to keep them healthy and safe.

Scared - Sense of panic, alarm or fear. These are normal feelings but it is important to talk with someone who can help you navigate this difficult experience

It is very important to consider self-care strategies especially when dealing with additional stressors such as caring for someone who is feeling suicidal, facing complicated grief and perhaps struggling with thoughts of suicide. Self-care can be viewed as the use of oxygen on an airplane; you have to put yours on first so you can help others.

Here are some basics ideas for self-care.

Connect with personal and professional supports - build a care team

Eat, sleep and hydrate - keep as healthy as possible

Move - Exercise and outdoor activities can enhance our coping and overall wellbeing.

Pause - take time to regroup, meditation and relaxation activities

Acknowledge - reach out and seek help and support

Develop a self-care action plan that may include journaling, exercise, and gratitude activities regular check in with others.

Grief Resources are listed on page 6 of this publication.

The Sarnia Lambton Suicide Committee

Where Have We Been and Where are We Going

The Sarnia Lambton Suicide Committee was created in 1990 under the guidance of the Canadian Mental Health Association. The committee members are from agencies, organizations and also include individuals who have endeavoured to make Sarnia Lambton a suicide safer community. Resources, trainings (safeTALK), conferences, World Suicide Prevention Day, bracelets/cards, advocacy are all the part of the mandate of this committee.

There have also been many other families and individuals that have supported a suicide safer community through actively supporting initiatives, fundraising (for trainings and programs) and advocating for good mental health programs.

The committee has met on a monthly basis for over 30yrs and is committed in its efforts to “Give Hope a Voice”.

Community Initiatives and Programs:

- World Suicide Prevention Day programs (September 10 every year) Yellow Ribbon
- Suicide Recognition and Prevention Protocol – 2005 Revised 2007 and 2012 – new revision to be completed in 2021 – Main mental health organizations and service providers have been part of the revision which includes protocol, safety planning and other supports.
- School Mental Health Leads and Social Workers through School Mental Health Ontario and Ministry of Education
- Mental Health and Addiction Nurses in Schools

- Mental Health Profile – Lambton Public Health Unit - 2018
- Living Works – ASIST trainings and SafeTALK, START – all trainings that build a suicide safer community
- Grief programs – SOS – Survivors of Suicide and ongoing support group
- Fundraising to sponsor SafeTALK, produce resources, build awareness
- Conferences and Trainings on Grief and Suicide, Suicide Prevention and Reaching Out youth programs
- Parent nights
- Youth Focus groups

One important change in the past 30 years is now we are able to talk about Suicide in a more open way. There is still stigma but progress has been made. The more we make it safe for people to talk about suicide openly, the more likely people will **reach out** for the help they may need.

“Preventing suicide is often possible and you are a key player in its prevention! You can make a difference-as a member of society, as a child, as a parent, as a friend, a colleague or as a neighbour.”

~ International Association for Suicide Prevention