# Preventing Suicide: Guidance for emergency departments

## Background

‘*Preventing Suicide: Guidance for emergency departments’* was commissioned by the Ministry of Health and written by Te Pou in conjunction with a working group including emergency department and mental health clinicians. Improving the care of people at risk of suicide presenting to emergency departments is an action arising from the Suicide Prevention Action Plan 2013-2016.

## Purpose

The guidance provides comprehensive up-to-date information for emergency departments on caring for people at risk of suicide. It is specifically designed for emergency departments but may be helpful in other settings.

## Key Points

* identifies nine key principles in caring for people at risk of suicide
* opens the possibility of appropriately skilled emergency department staff assessing suicide risk and aligns with existing emergency department processes
* initial triage and risk assessment allows for three different pathways: discharge to primary care, risk assessment within 72 hours, and immediate comprehensive risk assessment
* outlines two structured screening assessment tools for assessing risk in the emergency department depending on the nature of the risk
* structured clinical risk assessment includes identifying risks, warning signs, protective factors using clinical judgement and formulation to plan care in collaboration with the person and family/whanau
* provides questions for assessing suicidal thoughts, plans, actions, intent and capability
* notes the difficulties of accurately predicting short term risk and the significance of implicit attitudes
* appendices include;

1. comprehensive glossary of terms
2. list of unacceptable terms
3. two emergency department specific screening assessment tools (EDSRA and B-EDSRA)
4. static risk factors and warning signs
5. short term action plan designed to be written by/with the service user
6. case scenario