

Working together to Prevent Suicide – Core Skills Framework

This Framework has been developed to support capability, training, and skill development for anyone carrying out suicide prevention activities, including whānau, friends, frontline workers, and clinicians. While these roles require different levels of expertise, each plays an important part in a connected system of support, and the core skills apply across all areas. We have divided resources into three broad population groups. However, we understand the needs of some people may span more than one group.

For access to the full list of the identified online tools and resources visit the suicide prevention space on the Ministry of Health’s website.

The three areas each play a different role in supporting and responding to people experiencing suicidal distress	FAMILY AND WHĀNAU, FRIENDS AND NEIGHBOURS	COMMUNITY AND FRONTLINE	SUICIDE PREVENTION SPECIALISTS / CLINICIANS
	Includes those whose family and whānau , friends and neighbours may be experiencing suicidal distress. Core focus: supporting family and whānau, friends and neighbours to recognise suicidal distress, feel confident in safe communication, connecting people to support,, advocacy and escalating concerns.	Includes people whose roles bring them into contact with people who may be experiencing suicidal distress. This includes primary care workers, G.Ps, nurses, pharmacists, employers, teachers, sports coaches, faith leaders, volunteers, social workers, Police, youth workers, community health workers, peer support workers, counsellors, employers and workplaces, social media influencers, news media, peer support groups. Core focus: compassionate response, recognition of suicidal intent or distress, wellbeing and support planning (eg WRAP plans), and warm referrals.	Includes health practitioners and specialist mental health professionals responsible for assessment, treatment and care of people experiencing suicidal distress such as psychiatrists, clinical psychologists, mental health nurses, crisis intervention teams, suicide prevention specialists, whānau and community champions, suicide prevention coordinators and community mental health staff. Core focus: comprehensive assessment and formulation, evidence-based treatment, wellbeing and support planning, coordination of care, crisis support and safety.
	THE CORE SKILLS: THE KNOWLEDGE, TRAINING AND SKILLS TO SUPPORT SUICIDE PREVENTION		
	Knowledge & Awareness of Suicide Risk Recognise signs of distress, understand how that can impact wellbeing, and where to connect to get local support.	Apply understanding of suicide risk, trauma-informed practice, postvention principles, and relevant legal and ethical responsibilities. Practice ongoing skills development and knowledge acquisition.	Apply clinical knowledge, diagnostic skills, and evidence-based interventions that are culturally and age appropriate, while working within relevant mental health and legislative frameworks.
	Cultural Safety Appreciate how cultural identity and sense of belonging are interconnected with wellbeing.	Support people in culturally responsive ways by working alongside family, whānau, neighbours and communities, considers and adapts practice to components related to age, gender and sexual identity, as well as ethnic and cultural background.	Apply culturally grounded health models, incorporate cultural perspectives into clinical decision-making, and advocate for systemic equity. Understands Te Ao Māori and Pacific worldviews.
	Recognition and Response Recognise the signs of suicidal intent or distress, connect them with support, and seek additional or emergency assistance where needed.	Support people through culturally and age-appropriate assessment, collaborative wellbeing planning with family and whānau, and ongoing follow-up and connection to support.	Use comprehensive clinical understanding to develop personalised wellbeing plans and provide evidence-based support and intervention.
	Communication & Responsible messaging Talk openly and responsibly about suicide. Confident to listen with empathy, use non-stigmatising language, and communicate hope and support.	Lead supportive conversations using communication approaches adapted to age and culture and provide tailored support in ways people can understand.	Support people and communities during crisis through therapeutic communication, safe messaging, and respectful engagement with families and wider support networks.
	Family and Community Engagement Support people by reducing stigma, encouraging connection, and helping them access local services and cultural networks.	Connect with families and whānau, establish effective referral connections, and support communities following a suicide or critical incident.	Work with communities, services, and research partners to strengthen coordinated responses, support grief and recovery, and advocate for equitable systems.
	Self-care & Wellbeing Recognise when people need support, ask for help when needed and practice self-care to maintain their own wellbeing.	Identify secondary trauma and burnout early, uses supervision and support effectively, and set clear professional boundaries.	Help teams recover after critical incidents, model healthy wellbeing practices, and advocate for the staffing and resources needed to support sustainable care.
	CORE VALUES FOR ALL AREAS	Upholding and enhancing a person’s integrity and mana	Non-judgmental care
	Manaakitanga (care, support, inclusion, respect). Life promotion.		