

Risk assessment guide

Note This risk assessment guide is from the Mental Health in South Australia Emergency Management Policy and Procedure Series (2002) that is used by staff in mental health services. It forms part of the risk assessment, referral and follow up form developed for private practitioners. The form and the accompanying guidelines can be downloaded from the **square** CD Website. *Please note form continues over the following page.*

risk of harm to:		<input type="checkbox"/> self	<input type="checkbox"/> others	<input type="checkbox"/> both
<input type="checkbox"/> none	<input type="checkbox"/> low	<input type="checkbox"/> moderate	<input type="checkbox"/> significant	<input type="checkbox"/> extreme
No thoughts or action of harm.	Fleeting thoughts of harming themselves or harming others but no plans, current low alcohol or drug use.	Current thoughts/distress, past actions without intent or plans, moderate alcohol or drug use.	Current thoughts/past impulsive actions/recent impulsivity/some plans, but not well developed. Increased alcohol or drug use.	Current thoughts with expressed intentions/past history/plans. Unstable mental illness. High alcohol or drug use, intoxicated, violent to self/others, means at hand for harm to self/others.

level of problem with functioning				
<input type="checkbox"/> none/mild	<input type="checkbox"/> moderate	<input type="checkbox"/> significant impairment in one area	<input type="checkbox"/> serious impairment in several areas	<input type="checkbox"/> extreme impairment
No more than everyday problems/slight impairment when distressed.	Moderate difficulty in social, occupational or school functioning. Reduced ability to cope unassisted.	Significant impairment in either social, occupational or school functioning.	Serious impairment in several areas such as social, occupational or school functioning.	Inability to function in almost all areas.

level of support available				
<input type="checkbox"/> no problems/highly supportive	<input type="checkbox"/> moderately supportive	<input type="checkbox"/> limited support	<input type="checkbox"/> minimal	<input type="checkbox"/> no support in all areas
Most aspects are highly supportive. Effective involvement of self, family or professional.	Variety of support available and able to help in times of need.	Few sources of help, support system has incomplete ability to participate in treatment.	Few sources of support and not motivated.	No support available.

history of response to treatment				
<input type="checkbox"/> no problem/minimal difficulties	<input type="checkbox"/> moderate response	<input type="checkbox"/> poor response	<input type="checkbox"/> minimal response	<input type="checkbox"/> no response
Most forms of treatment have been successful or new client.	Some responses in the medium term to highly structured interventions.	Minimal response even in highly structured interventions.	Minimal response even in highly structured interventions.	No response to any treatment in the past.

Risk assessment guide (continued)

attitude and engagement to treatment

<input type="checkbox"/> no problem	<input type="checkbox"/> moderate response	<input type="checkbox"/> poor engagement	<input type="checkbox"/> minimal response	<input type="checkbox"/> no response
Accepts illness and agrees with treatment, or new client.	Variable/ ambivalent response to treatment.	Rarely accepts diagnosis.	Client never cooperates willingly.	Client has only been able to be treated in an involuntary capacity.

Is the person's risk level changeable?	Highly changeable	<input type="checkbox"/> yes	<input type="checkbox"/> no
Are there factors that indicate a level of uncertainty in this risk assessment? (e.g: poor engagement, gaps or conflicting information)	Low Assessment Confidence	<input type="checkbox"/> yes	<input type="checkbox"/> no

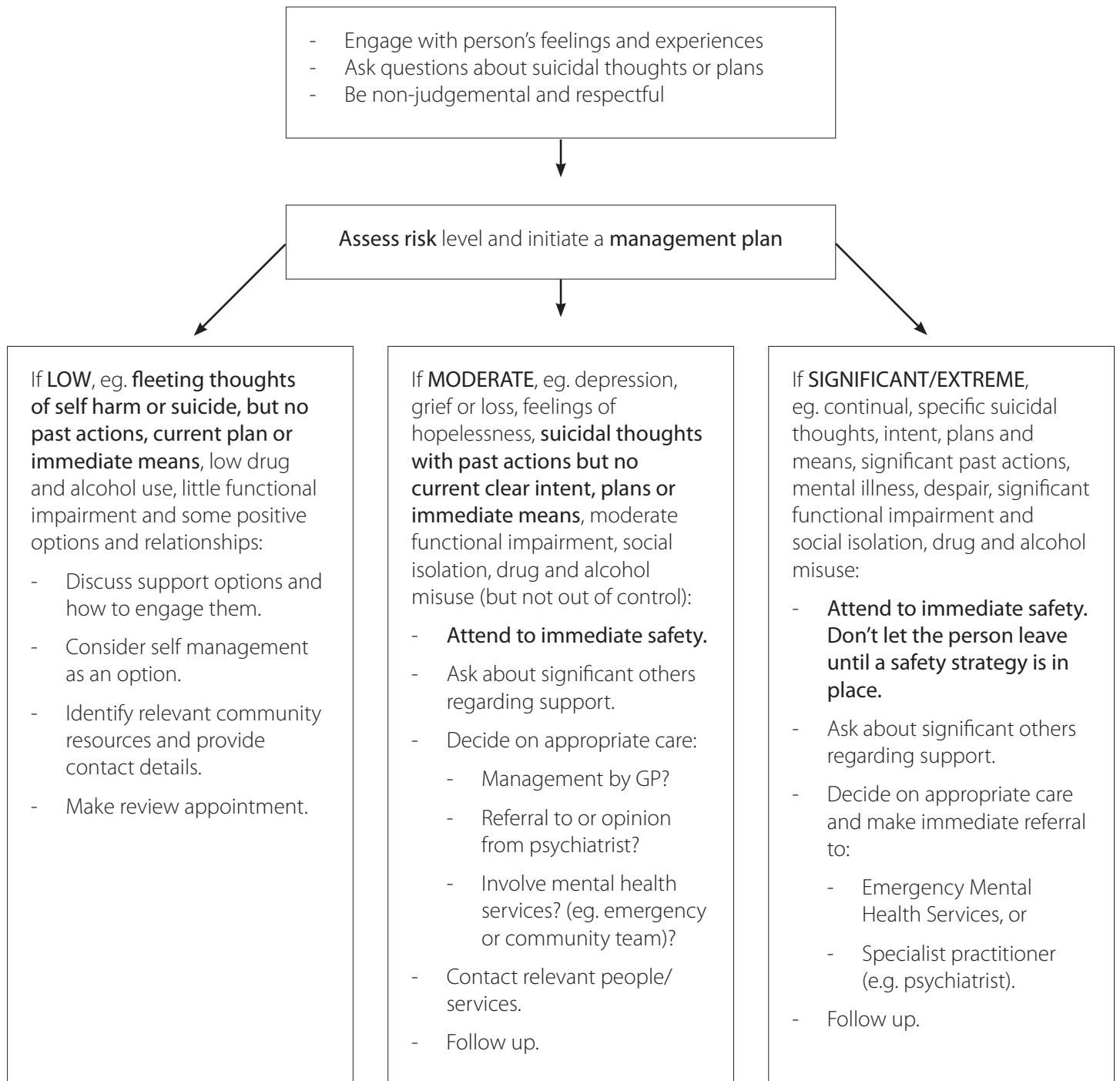
overall assessment of risk

<input type="checkbox"/> none	<input type="checkbox"/> low	<input type="checkbox"/> medium	<input type="checkbox"/> high	<input type="checkbox"/> extreme
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Note: Risk assessment is not a precise 'science'. Your professional judgement and experience are also crucial. Remember too, that a person's risk of suicide may be highly changeable, fluctuating at different times and in response to certain events.

assessment and management of suicide risk chart

The following diagram represents some general principles and options for assessing and managing suicide risk. Some of the care and referral pathways will need to be adapted for individual clients.



Active, connected referral and follow up are essential for ongoing care.

Ensure a seamless, supported transition to the next stage in the person's care. Do not leave gaps in follow up.