



This prompt guide can assist mobile crisis team members when conducting mobile crisis assessments. The assessment tool and companion prompt guide are designed for use by all mobile crisis team members, including clinicians, peers, community health workers, Emergency Medical Technicians (EMTs), and other qualified team members. The guide supports training mobile crisis teams to administer assessments through a person-centered, trauma-informed approach. The suggested questions are designed to solicit answers from a person in crisis on sensitive topics. When asking these questions, remember to attend to both verbal and non-verbal communications. Be an active listener: paraphrase what is said to you, allow for silence and reflection, and validate feelings and experiences. Modulate your tone of voice and ensure that you respect the personal space of the individual in crisis.

Potential adaptations for some prompts are offered that may be more culturally appropriate for some communities. Mobile crisis teams should continue to develop adaptations that meet the cultural and linguistic needs of the communities they serve.

When linguistic challenges arise, use the most appropriate resource to help facilitate the crisis assessment (e.g., interpreter). Deciding when to add an interpreter requires careful judgment. The interpreter should be knowledgeable of behavioral health terminology and be familiar with the concepts and purposes of the crisis assessment process.

Mobile crisis team members must account for legal and ethical concerns, including Tarasoff/Child Protective Services/Adult Protective Services.

CRISIS EVENT DESCRIPTION

- Can you tell me a bit more about what has been going on lately? What happened to you?
- Tell me a little more about how _____ has changed/affected you?
- Who else is concerned about this and is trying to support you? Are they reachable?

CAUSES LEADING TO THE CRISIS EVENT

- Are there relationships with your family or friends that are contributing to how you are feeling today?
- Have you been diagnosed by a doctor or other provider with any mental health conditions? If so, which one(s)?
 - Adaptation: Are there challenges with your emotions or thoughts that you have talked about with someone who helps with healing?
- Are you experiencing any sleep disturbances or changes in appetite?
 - Adaptation: How have your sleeping and eating been? Are they in harmony with how you usually feel?
- Have you recently experienced any major life changes or losses?
 - Adaptation: Have there been changes or losses in your life that are affecting your heart or spirit?
- Have you felt hopeless or overwhelmed recently?
 - Adaptation: Can you share how often the world feels too heavy or out of reach?

ASSESSING FOR TRAUMA

- Have you experienced trauma or abuse?
- Did you have any fears as a child, teenager, or more recently in your life? How did you cope with them?
- Are there painful memories or experiences from your past that continue to weigh on you?
- Have there been challenges or losses in your life that are affecting your heart or spirit today?

NOTE: Do not ask members to describe emotionally overwhelming traumatic events in detail.

PSYCHOSIS OR MANIA

- What, if anything, is impacting your ability to sleep?
- Do you want to sleep but cannot fall asleep or do you not have a safe place to sleep?
- Have others told you that you have been acting differently than usual?
- Do you hear voices from within your own mind, or voices that seem to come from somewhere outside of you that other people can't hear?
- If yes, have there been times when the voices told you to hurt or kill yourself? How frequently has this happened? What happened?
 - Adaptation: Are there things you are seeing or hearing that others might not be experiencing?
- Have others around you told you that you have been impulsive or making risky decisions (e.g., taking drugs, skipping school/work, spending money, gambling, having risky sex)?

SAFETY AND RISK ASSESSMENT:

ADDITIONAL PROMPTING QUESTIONS TO ASSESS FOR SUICIDAL IDEATION

- Sometimes people feel that life is not worth living. Can you tell me how you feel about your own life?
- What are some of the aspects of your life that may make you feel or think that your life is not worth living?
- Do you find yourself wishing to fall asleep and never wake up?

CURRENT SUICIDAL IDEATION

- When did you begin to experience these thoughts and feelings?
- What happened before you had them?
- How frequently have you had these thoughts and feelings?

SUICIDAL THOUGHTS IN THE LAST THREE MONTHS

- Have you had thoughts of taking your life in the past three months?
- How frequently have you had these thoughts and feelings?
- Do these thoughts intrude into your thinking and activities?
- How strong are they?
- Can you describe them?

PAST SUICIDAL ATTEMPTS

- Have you ever made an attempt to take your life?
- In the past, have you ever done anything with the intention of ending your life?
- When did you come the closest to ending your life?
- How did you survive (each attempt)?

SUICIDAL PLAN ASSESSMENT

- From what you've told me, you appear to be in a lot of pain and that makes a lot of sense. You're under a lot of pressure. Some people who are feeling a lot of the same types of things have thoughts about suicide. What thoughts have you experienced?
- Have you ever thought about how you would kill (use person's own words) yourself?
- Do you have a plan to harm yourself or take your own life? If so, can you describe your plan?
- How easy would it be for you to do this?
- Note: if the person talks about using a gun, other weapon, or medication/chemical, ask direct questions about access to means.
 - Do you have a gun or access to a gun?
 - You mentioned you would take a bottle of pills. What medication do you have access to?

PLAN TO ACT ASSESSMENT

- Have you had these thoughts and had some intention of acting on them?
- Have you thought about when you would end your life?

MEANS ASSESSMENT

- Have you started to gather the _____ you would use to take your life?
- Do you have access to them now?
- Do you have methods available to you to take your life, such as over the counter pills or prescription pills; knives; or proximity to a balcony, bridge, or subway?

VIOLENCE AND HOMICIDALITY RISK ASSESSMENT

- People often have mixed feelings and even thoughts of revenge for _____ and the harm/pain it caused.
- When someone is as upset as you are, they can have thoughts of hurting the person who has hurt them. Have you had thoughts like this?
- Who are you thinking about hurting?
- How often do you have these thoughts?
- Have you ever made plans to harm someone?
- You mentioned you wanted to _____. How easy would it be to do that?
- What are some reasons that would stop you from doing _____ or acting out and hurting _____ or yourself?

ASSESSING FOR SUBSTANCE USE

- Are you currently under the influence of alcohol or drugs?
- When was the last time you had a drink or taken something that took the edge off?
- Tell me a little about your drug use. What drugs do you use?
- What do you like most about the drugs you use?
- How do you take them? How often?
- How does this drug help you?
- How has it harmed you?
- Tell me what you have noticed about your drug use. How has it changed over time?

PROTECTIVE FACTORS, STRENGTHS, AND RESOURCES

*Protective factors are unique to the individual and it is important to allow the person in crisis to tell us what they are. Asking prompting questions allows for discovery and understanding of what **they** deem valuable to their life. Some potential protective factors to elicit are their ability for self-regulation, interpersonal strengths, and hope for the future.*

- How do you feel about your own future?
- What would help you to feel or think more positively, or hopefully, about your future?
- Do you have a support system in place, such as friends or family?
- Do you have any current treatment providers that are helpful in your journey?
- How do you find balance or calm when feelings of anger or frustration visit you?
 - Adapted: Who walks beside you in life, supporting you like family or close friends? What do they do that is most helpful?
- What typically works to help you cope with stress or anxiety?
 - Adapted: How do you find peace or calm within yourself or with your family and community?
- What protects you from doing things to harm yourself?
- What are some reasons that keep you going even on the hardest of days?

DETERMINATION OF SAFETY

The questions in the sections above are provided as potential prompts to support a determination of whether the individual in crisis is at imminent risk or a danger to themselves or others. The risk assessment prompts provided here are based on an evidence-supported question set designed to establish relative risk of death by suicide. It is important to note that risk changes over time. Mobile crisis teams cannot rely on the member's self-report or clinical judgement alone to determine the risk of suicide.

When assessing risk, consider the number of protective factors that the person in crisis reports. Take their responses to these questions and their level of engagement with the mobile crisis team into consideration as you make your determination.

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