

Out of School Time Youth Suicide Prevention Toolkit

Getting Started Guide

About This Guide

Youth-serving organizations vary widely in their staffing, structure, resources, partnerships, and prior experience with suicide prevention. Some organizations are just beginning to discuss suicide prevention, while others already have training, referral pathways, or formal policies in place.

This Getting Started Guide is designed to help your organization identify where to begin in EDC's [Out of School Time Youth Suicide Prevention Toolkit](#). It is not a formal assessment or readiness score. Instead, it offers guiding questions to help your team reflect on your current practices and select the toolkit sections that are most relevant to your next steps.

Use this guide in collaboration with leadership, supervisors, direct service staff, volunteers, behavioral health partners, youth advisors, or other members of your team who will help shape suicide prevention work in your organization.

If you would like to provide feedback on the Out of School Time Youth Suicide Prevention Toolkit, you can do so [at this link](#).

Need more tailored support?

EDC provides consultation and technical assistance to help youth-serving organizations integrate suicide prevention into policies, practices, partnerships, and everyday youth support efforts. Visit solutions.edc.org or contact solutions@edc.org to learn more.

Guide Components

- Identifying Your Organization's Readiness Level
- Quick Reference: Where to Start?

Identify Your Organization's Readiness Level

Read the characteristics of the three readiness levels below: Foundational, Developing, and Advanced. Then, select the one that best describes your organization right now. You may find that your organization fits more than one level. Choose the level that best reflects your overall current capacity and staff knowledge of suicide prevention concepts. We have provided recommended priority actions for each level and specific toolkit sections and resources to help you get started.

We recommend creating an action plan with your team to identify and outline specific goals and outcomes for your efforts using the **Resource 14: Action Planning Template** after determining your readiness level.

Foundational Readiness

Your organization is beginning or exploring integration of suicide prevention into your youth-serving efforts.

This may describe your organization if:

- Leadership buy-in is limited, emerging, or not yet organization-wide.
- Suicide prevention efforts are mostly informal, reactive, or crisis driven.
- Staff or volunteers have had little or no suicide prevention training.
- Referral pathways or community partnerships are limited or unclear.
- There is no formal process for reviewing data, tracking concerns, or evaluating prevention efforts.
- Policies and procedures for identifying and responding to suicide risk are limited, informal, or not yet developed.

Priority Actions

Organizations at the foundational level should:

- Establish an internal team to lead suicide prevention activities.
- Build leadership buy-in and a shared vision for youth wellness.

- Provide basic staff and volunteer training on key suicide prevention topics.
- Introduce universal, relationship-based prevention practices across your organization.
- Begin identifying referral partners and crisis support resources that match the needs of the youth you serve.
- Start conversations about what suicide risk identification and support policies or procedures are needed.

Start Here in the Toolkit

Organizations at the foundational level should begin with sections that can help you build a shared understanding, confidence, and basic infrastructure for suicide prevention activities:

- **Section 1:** Promoting Youth Wellbeing
- **Section 2:** Preparedness to Identify & Support Youth at Risk of Suicide
- **Resource 2:** Risk and Protective Factor Handout
- **Resource 3:** Risk and Protective Factor Impact Planning Model Template
- **Resource 5:** Warning Signs of Suicide Flyer
- **Resource 7:** Model Protocols & Resources
- **Resource 14:** Action Planning Template

Developing Readiness

Your organization has some structures in place and is expanding its suicide prevention capacity.

This may describe your organization if:

- Leadership supports suicide prevention, but support may not yet be consistent across all programs or roles.
- Some staff have been trained, but training is inconsistent or not routinely refreshed.

- Some tools, screeners, or informal processes are used to identify youth who may need support.
- Partnerships or referral pathways exist but may be informal, siloed, or dependent on individual relationships.
- Evaluation is limited, episodic, or tied mainly to grant reporting or one-off events/activities.
- Limited guidance, policies, or procedures exist for suicide risk identification and response, but they may need to be clarified, updated, better communicated, or formalized.

Priority Actions

Organizations at the developing level should:

- Create, update, or strengthen formal policies and procedures for suicide risk identification, response, and postvention support.
- Formalize a training structure and sequence on relevant suicide prevention topics for all staff.
- Strengthen staff role clarity and supervision supports.
- Improve coordination across programs and partnerships.
- Expand youth voice and culturally responsive practices.
- Begin routine data use and evaluation to track impact of your efforts.

Start Here in the Toolkit

Organizations at the developing level should focus on strengthening consistency, role clarity, protocols, and coordination of suicide prevention activities across organizational activities and staff roles.

- **Section 2:** Preparedness to Identify & Support Youth at Risk of Suicide
- **Section 3:** Supporting Youth & Staff After a Suicide Loss
- **Section 4:** Professional Development (particularly the tables of PD Goals by Staff Roles)
- **Resource 3:** Risk and Protective Factor Impact Planning Model Template

- **Resource 6:** Risk Response Quick Reference Guide
- **Resource 8:** Flowchart and Process Graphics
- **Resource 9:** Model Agenda for Protocol Development
- **Resource 13:** Data Tracking List
- **Resource 14:** Action Planning Template

Advanced Readiness

Your organization has integrated and sustainable suicide prevention systems.

This may describe your organization if:

- Leadership and organizational culture strongly support suicide prevention.
- Staff training and youth wellbeing supports are consistent and ongoing.
- Partnerships and referral pathways are strong, active, and regularly reviewed.
- Evaluation and quality improvement are routine.
- Policies and procedures for suicide risk identification, response, and postvention support are strong, regularly communicated, and reinforced through training and supervision.

Priority Actions

Organizations at the advanced level should:

- Refine and scale effective practices using lessons learned.
- Engage in regular review, analysis, and continuous quality improvement of existing efforts to identify changes in needs as opportunities for growth
- Deepen youth leadership and co-design of initiatives and activities.

- Consider inviting families and community partners to offer feedback on prevention activities.
- Advocate for systems-level, organizational change and sustainability to ensure efforts last over time.
- Mentor or support other organizations, including ensuring partners are aware of suicide prevention activities.

Start Here in the Toolkit

Organizations at the advanced level should focus on continuous quality improvement, sustainability, youth leadership and family voice, systems alignment, and supporting the broader field.

- **Section 4:** Professional Development (particularly the Professional Development Sustainability and Data & Evaluation section)
- **Resource 6:** Risk Response Quick Reference Guide
- **Resource 8:** Flowchart and Process Graphics
- **Resource 10:** Sample MOUs
- **Resource 12:** Suicide Risk and Behavior Data Sources
- **Resource 13:** Data Tracking List
- **Resource 14:** Action Planning Template

Quick Reference: Where to Start?

There is no single correct place to begin your efforts. The best starting point is the section of the toolkit that helps your organization take the next practical step toward safer, more coordinated, and more supportive practices for youth.

As you get started, align your first steps with your organization's identified readiness level and use the Resource 14: Action Planning Template to lay out the specific actions your team will take to address your areas of focus.

Consult with your team, take time to understand your current resources and capacity, and identify a shared vision for your suicide prevention activities to guide your efforts.

The chart below offers a quick reference for where your organization might get started based on its readiness level. You can return to the toolkit as your organization's readiness grows.

If your organization is...	Start with...	Focus on
New to suicide prevention	■ Section 1: Promoting Youth Wellbeing ■ Section 2: Preparedness to Identify & Support Youth at Risk of Suicide ■ Resource 2: Risk and Protective Factors ■ Resource 4: Recommended Suicide Prevention Trainings & Programs ■ Resource 5: Warning Signs of Suicide Flyer	■ Shared understanding of suicide prevention ■ Leadership buy-in ■ Basic training (gatekeeper) on key suicide prevention concepts
Responding to more youth disclosures of suicide risk	■ Section 2: Preparedness to Identify & Support Youth at Risk of Suicide ■ Resource 4: Recommended Suicide Prevention Trainings & Programs ■ Resource 5: Warning Signs of Suicide Flyer ■ Resource 6: Risk Response Quick Reference Guide ■ Resource 8: Flowchart and Process Graphics	■ Risk factors and warning signs of suicide ■ Policy and protocols for identifying and responding to youth at risk ■ Staff response training based on role ■ Referral pathways
Lacking written policies and protocols for suicide prevention activities	■ Section 2: Preparedness to Identify & Support Youth at Risk of Suicide ■ Section 3: Supporting Youth & Staff After a Suicide Loss ■ Resource 7: Model Protocol & Resources ■ Resource 8: Flowchart and Process Graphics	■ Developing comprehensive suicide identification, response, and postvention policies and protocols ■ Establishing role clarity ■ Outlining referral pathways and documentation process

	▪ Resource 9: Model Agenda for Protocol Development ▪ Resource 10: Sample MOUs	
Building community connections and partnerships	▪ Section 2: Preparedness to Identify & Support Youth at Risk of Suicide ▪ Section 3: Supporting Youth & Staff After a Suicide Loss ▪ Resource 10: Sample MOUs	▪ Identifying resources in your area (e.g., Asset Mapping) ▪ Establishing informal or formal agreements with partners ▪ Creating outreach and communication plans ▪ Updating policies and procedures as relevant
Responding to or recovering from a suicide death	▪ Section 3: Supporting Youth & Staff After a Suicide Loss ▪ Resource 10: Sample MOUs ▪ Resource 11: Grief Support Resources	▪ Communicating on safe messaging ▪ Offering grief support and messages of hope and healing ▪ Establishing memorialization guidance ▪ Updating policies and procedures as relevant
Already implementing comprehensive prevention practices	▪ Section 4: Resources for Ongoing Staff Professional Development ▪ Resource 12: Suicide Risk and Behavior Data Sources ▪ Resource 13: Data Tracking List	▪ Improving data collection and evaluation efforts ▪ Ensuring sustainability of activities ▪ Scaling activities that have been effective