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# **Staff Workshop 1**

## **Understanding Suicide Prevention in Senior Living Communities**

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# What we will learn

The problem of suicide among residents of senior living communities

- How to recognize the warning signs of suicide
- What to do if we think a resident is showing the signs
- How we can promote emotional health of all of our residents

# Coping with the issue of suicide

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-TALK (8255). 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

- Employee Assistance Program
- Clergy
- Social Worker
- Community Mental Health Center

# Suicidal behavior includes:

- Suicide
- Suicide attempts
- Passive or indirect suicide



# Suicide among older adults in the United States

## Suicide rates increase with age

- More than 5,000 older adults die by suicide every year
- 80% of these suicides are white men

(Source: CDC. (2005). Web-based Injury Statistics Query and Reporting System (WISQARS). National Center for Injury Pre-vention and Control, CDC. Retrieved June, 1, 2009 from <http://www.cdc.gov/ncipc/wisqars/default.htm>)

# **Older adults die more often in a suicide attempt**

## **Young people**

100 to 200 attempts: 1 death

## **Older adults**

4 attempts: 1 death

(Source: American Association of Suicidology. (2009). 2006 official final data. Retrieved May 14, 2009 from <http://www.suicidology.org/web/guest/stats-and-tools/statistics>)

# **Suicide and suicide attempts in senior living communities**

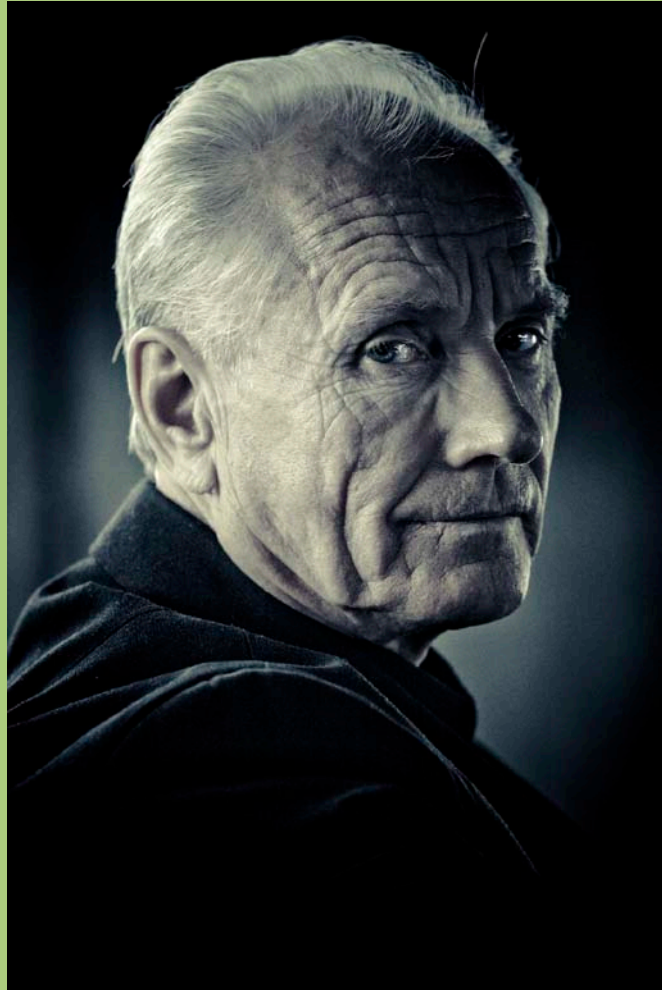
- Little is known
- Residents may have many risk factors for suicide
- Common means: jumping from building, hanging, cutting, and overdoses

# Mrs. Smith





# Mr. Jones



# Two Questions:

1. Could we have known that Mrs. Smith and Mr. Jones would attempt suicide?
2. Can we do anything to prevent other suicides and suicide attempts?

# Mrs. Smith's warning signs

Something seemed out of place...



# Mr. Jones' Warning Signs



# Warning signs of immediate risk of suicide

Someone...

- Threatening or talking about wanting to kill or hurt him/herself
- Looking for ways to kill him/herself
- Talking or writing about death, dying, or suicide, when this is out of the ordinary for the person

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**Someone threatening to hurt  
him/herself,  
or talking about wanting to hurt  
or kill him/herself may say:**

- “I’m going to kill myself.”
- “I’m going to end it all.”
- “I just want to die.”

# Someone looking for ways to kill him/herself may:

- Stockpile pills
- Obtain a gun
- Steal a knife
- Refuse food or medicine



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# **Someone talking or writing about death, dying, or suicide may say:**

- “Death would solve all my problems.”
- “I wish I were dead.”



# **Take immediate action if you notice these warning signs**

- Threatening or talking about wanting to kill or hurt him/herself
- Looking for ways to kill him/herself by seeking access to firearms, available pills, or other means
- Talking or writing about death, dying or suicide, when this is out of the ordinary for the person

# If you see any immediate warning signs:

- Do not leave the resident alone
- Call 911 OR Contact \_\_\_\_\_ [in this facility]
- Call resident's emergency contact

# Other warning signs

- Hopelessness
- Rage, uncontrolled anger, seeking revenge
- Acting reckless or engaging in risky activities, seemingly without thinking
- Feeling trapped - like there's no way out
- Increased alcohol or drug use

# Other warning signs (cont.)

- Withdrawing from friends, family, or society
- Anxiety, agitation, unable to sleep or sleeping all the time
- Dramatic changes in mood
- No reason for living; no sense of purpose in life

# If you see any of these less immediate warning signs:

- Contact \_\_\_\_\_ [mental health provider]
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

# Helping each other recognize and respond to the warning signs

Two volunteers needed



# What to do in the event of a suicide death or attempt: *[Example]*

- Call 911
- \_\_\_\_\_ [*Staff / Department*] notifies resident's family
- \_\_\_\_\_ [*Staff/ Department*] assists other residents, family, and staff
- \_\_\_\_\_ [*Staff/ Department*] notifies regulatory authority

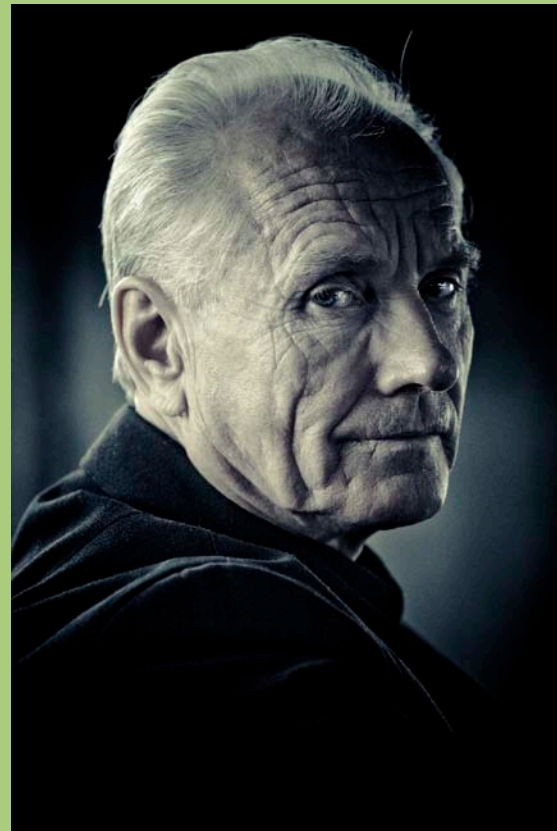
# What to do after a suicide crisis

- Take care of yourself
- Take care of other residents and staff members
- Take care of residents' families





# Mrs. Smith and Mr. Jones



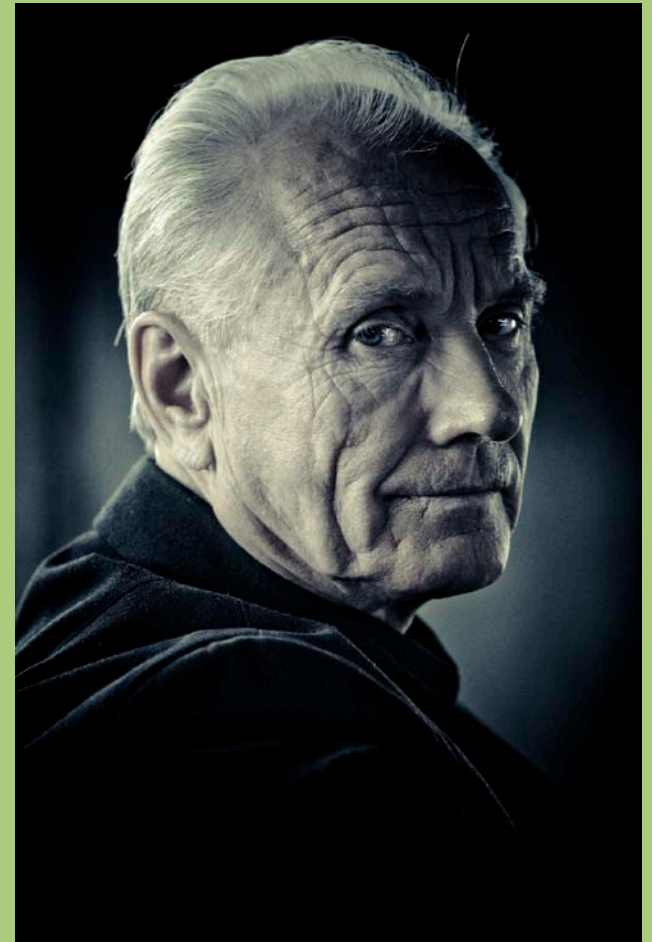
# Mrs. Smith

- Suffered from depression
- Didn't leave her room



# Mr. Jones

- Recently moved to the senior living community
- Wife died
- Stopped socializing
- Did not participate in activities
- Argued with son about money
- Was drinking heavily



# Depression

- Depression can contribute to suicide risk.
- We can help residents who are depressed.
- If you think a resident is depressed, you should tell [*staff title*].



# Substance abuse

- Alcohol
- Prescription and over-the-counter medication
- If you think a resident has a substance abuse problem, you should tell [*staff title*].



# Reducing Suicide Risk



Volunteers needed



# Helping Mrs. Williams

Activities help Mrs. Williams:

- Make friends and connections
- Feel good about herself and her life
- Have a sense of purpose



# Helping ALL residents

Positive activities help reduce suicide risk among all residents





# Reduce suicide risk through connections

- Family and friends
- Staff
- The community



# Reduce suicide risk through a positive outlook and a sense of meaning in life



# Reduce suicide risk with a positive physical environment

- Pleasant and homelike
- Promotes social connections



# Some things to remember:



- Take action if you notice warning signs.
- Depression and suicide are not a normal part of aging.
- There are things we can do every day to help the residents be happier and healthier.





*Thank-you!*