



Behavioral Health Services (BHS)

QUICK GUIDE

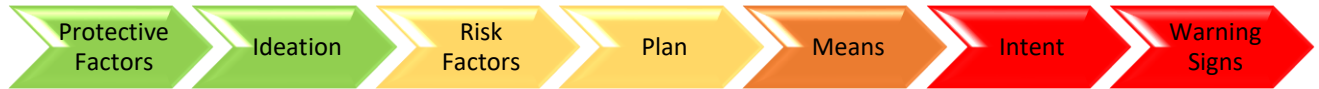
**Guidelines for Danger to Others Assessment
and Treatment Practice**

Fall 2024



Quick Guide: Danger to Others Assessments and Treatment Practice

Determine Level of Risk



Interventions Based Upon Risk

Low Risk

- Therapeutic interventions to address ideation & motivation
- Engagement of support systems
- Provide resources, referrals or linkage to crisis hotlines, community supports, etc.
- Safety Planning

Moderate Risk

- Low Risk Interventions and:
- Further assessment regarding access to lethal means and plan to remove or disable those means
- Develop a more comprehensive Safety Plan
- Consult your supervisor and/or HCA P&Ps, which may include consulting with a Designated Clinician or the Crisis Assessment Team
- Initiate 5150/5585
- Consult & consider invoking your Duty to Protect

High Risk

- Seek consultation about risk, treatment options, and consider invoking your Duty to Protect and:
- Initiate a 5150/5585 evaluation or contact appropriate Designated Clinician or Crisis Assessment Team (CAT)
- Ongoing monitoring and assessment



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RISK FACTORS

Risk factors are the demographics and new or persisting attributes of an individual that signal the clinician to increase awareness of a higher potential for danger to others at some point in time. Note that the level of risk is not solely based on the number of risk factors present, since severity of each variable needs to be considered with clinical judgment. These include, but are not limited to:

- Demographics; Special Populations
 - Age
 - Gender
 - Ethnicity
 - Sexual Orientation
 - Minority Status
 - Religion
 - Occupation
- History of suicidality, attempts, or self-injurious behaviors
- History of homicidality, attempts, or harming others
- Previous threats of suicidality/homicidality & fostering violent ideologies
- Recent acute stressors or events, which may include:
 - Recent life loss or crisis, such as a death or the loss of a relationship or job
- Current or historical trauma or bullying
- Current or historical abuse
- History of Behavioral Health Symptoms, especially:
 - Depression, Mania, Suicidal Ideation, Impulsivity, Unstable Relationships, and/or Substance Abuse
- Current or historical impulsivity or aggression
- History of Substance Use or recent overdose
- Isolation, lack of support, or social withdrawal, which may include:
 - Few supportive relationships
- High-conflict or violent relationships
- History or current violent home environment
- Availability of lethal means
- Serious medical illness
- Barriers to health care, such as lack of access to providers or medications
- Current or historical cruelty towards animals
- Exposure to suicide and/or acts of violence towards others, including:
 - Family history of suicide
 - Personal experience with a family member, friend, or acquaintance ending their life by suicide
 - Witnessing torture or acts of violence



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PROTECTIVE FACTORS

Protective factors impart a degree of resilience against homicidal behaviors and can be utilized to help the individual build motivation to protect against acting on homicidal ideations. These protective factors may include, but are not limited to:

- Communicating reasons for living
- Access to physical and mental health care
- Engagement in active treatment
- Supportive relationships with health care providers
- Positive family role models, attachment to family, and family support¹
- Safe and supportive school and community environments¹
- Connectedness to individuals, family, community, and social institutions¹
- Sources of continued care after psychiatric hospitalization
- Coping and conflict/problem-solving skills¹
- Cultural and religious factors¹
- Healthy and constructive hobbies and interests
- The ability to self-reflect and have a constructive view of their identity



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WARNING SIGNS

Warning signs are imminent signals or red flags that indicate a higher likelihood of homicidal thoughts and behaviors in the immediate future. Research also shares that new, active, or current warning signs are associated more with short-term risks for violence, while historical factors are more predicative of longer-term risks¹. These warning signs include but are not limited to:

- Current emotional states including mood swings or lability
- Current or historical violent or aggressive behaviors¹
- Current symptom presentation:
 - emotional distress,
 - hopelessness,
 - anxiety,
 - substance abuse,
 - irritability,
 - agitation,
 - delusions,
 - command hallucinations
 - grief and/or anger
- Current or past victimization by a bully¹
- History of early childhood abuse or neglect¹
- Current or historical cruelty towards animals¹
- Difficulty controlling feelings like anger; increased loss in temper¹
- Recent statements about death, suicide, or homicide including:
 - Mention of dying/killing, disappearing, hurting/shooting self/others, and other types of self-harm/harm-to-others
- Recent stressful life events
- Increased use of alcohol/drugs/risk-taking behavior¹
- Withdrawal from friends and usual activities; decline in school performance¹
- Access or fascination with weapons, especially guns¹
- Recent acquisition of a weapon or carrying a weapon¹
- Planning to commit acts of violence; announcing threats or plans to hurt others¹

¹ American Psychological Association. Retrieved from <https://www.apa.org/helpcenter/warning-signs>



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HELPFUL RESOURCES

Crisis Assessment Teams (CAT): The following is the phone number for HCA BHS CAT programs for adults and children. This 24/7 number is available to all members of Orange County experiencing a behavioral health crisis and requiring assessment:

855-625-4657