

Supporting Someone Who is Suicidal:

What a Leader Can Do if a Member is in Crisis

Recognizing the Signs and Understanding the Stakes



As union leaders, you are often the first point of contact when a member is struggling. You're trusted, respected, and seen as someone who can help. That's why it's critical to understand how to recognize and respond when a member may be experiencing suicidal thoughts.

Suicide is a leading cause of death among working-age adults. In the trades, where physical demands, chronic pain, job insecurity, and stigma around mental health are common, the risk is even higher. But here's the good news: leadership presence and early intervention can save lives.

Warning Signs to Watch For

Members in crisis may not always say "I'm thinking about suicide." But they often show signs that something is seriously wrong. Be alert to:

- Talking about feeling hopeless, trapped, or like a burden
- Withdrawing from coworkers, family, or union activities
- Sudden changes in behavior—especially after a loss or major stressor
- Increased use of alcohol or drugs
- Giving away possessions or saying goodbye
- Expressing thoughts like "I can't do this anymore" or "Everyone would be better off without me"

If something feels off, trust your gut. It's better to check in and be wrong than to stay silent and regret it.

What You Can Do as a Leader

You don't need to be a mental health professional to make a difference. You just need to be present, compassionate, and willing to act. Your role isn't to diagnose or fix—it's to connect and support.

Steps to Take When a Member is in Crisis

Here's a simple framework to guide your response:

- **Notice and approach.** If you see warning signs, don't ignore them. Find a private moment to check in.
- **Ask directly.** It's okay to ask, "Are you thinking about suicide?" This won't plant the idea—it shows you care.
- **Listen without judgment.** Let them talk. Avoid trying to "solve" it or minimize their pain.
- **Don't leave them alone.** If they're in immediate danger, stay with them and seek help.
- **Connect them to MAP or emergency services.** Call 911 if there's an immediate threat. Otherwise, help them contact MAP for confidential support.
- **Follow up.** A simple check-in the next day can make a big difference.

Your calm, steady presence can be a lifeline. You don't have to have all the answers—you just have to show up.

Building a Culture of Safety and Support

Preventing suicide isn't just about reacting to crisis—it's about creating a culture where members feel safe to speak up before they reach a breaking point. That starts with leadership.

MAP is here to support you in building that culture. We offer training, consultation, and direct support for members and leaders alike.

What You Can Do This Month

Here are three proactive steps to strengthen your local's safety net:

- **Schedule a MAP suicide prevention training.** We'll equip your stewards and foremen with the tools to recognize and respond to risk.
- **Promote MAP at union meetings.** Normalize help-seeking by reminding members that support is confidential and judgment-free.
- **Create a "check-in culture."** Encourage leaders to regularly ask, "How are you doing—really?"

You are not alone in this work. MAP is your partner in protecting the mental health and lives of your members.

For more information, tools, resources, or app information, call your Life Advisor Member Assistance Program!



Ulliance provides no cost, confidential, short-term counseling for you & your family.

Call us- we're here to help **877.912.2733**