

**To:** All PerformCare Providers  
**From:** PerformCare  
**Date:** March 24, 2026  
**Subject:** **Suicide Prevention Memo #28: Suicide Risk Amongst Black/African Americans; Importance of a Comprehensive Screening**

---

We are revisiting the issue of suicide risk in Black/African American population and Black/African American youth. Statistics from the US Department of Health and Human Services Office of Minority Health show that in 2023, suicide was the 3<sup>rd</sup> leading cause of death among Black or African American ages 15 to 34. There were disproportionately higher reports of psychological distress and serious mental illness within this demographic. For youth ages 15 – 19, deaths by suicide were highest among Black or African Americans than any other group in 2022. Alarming, there were corresponding lower access to care and engagement in treatment.

Comprehensive screening remains integral to managing safety and promoting treatment engagement. While some risk factors for suicide are common to all demographic groups, others, such as racial discrimination and systemic inequalities and one's *perception* of these issues, socioeconomic factors, and absence of culturally competent care, are unique to this population. In a 2021 review examining factors contributing to suicide in Black youth and young adults, Talley et al. found that racial discrimination increased risk of suicidal behavior in this demographic and recommended culturally responsive screening. Culturally responsive screening is a wholistic approach that goes beyond structured assessment scales to examine how some behaviors/symptoms may be more than what they appear. For example, risk-taking and aggressive behaviors may be indicative of an attempt to die without the stigma associated with suicide, or isolation and withdrawal that appears to have no clear antecedent may be a response to perceived discrimination. For those working with younger children, integration of factors unique to this population, such as bullying, is important to the risk formulation process (Molock et al. 2023).

For those preferring a more structured evaluation, The *Cultural Assessment of Risk for Suicide* (CARS), is an available resource. It was developed in 2013 by Chu et al. and was the first tool of its kind to systematically integrate cultural factors in the assessment of risk for suicide. More about the CARS can be found [here](#). Whichever approach you choose, it is important to ensure that assessments are thorough and consider factors unique to this population that may place them at increased risk of suicide.

## References

<https://minorityhealth.hhs.gov/mental-and-behavioral-health-blackafrican-americans>

<https://communityconnections.net/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/CARS-and-Cultural-Theory-and-Model-of-Suicide-COMPILED-Final.pdf>

Molock, S. D., Boyd, R. C., Alvarez, K., Cha, C., Denton, E.-g., Glenn, C. R., Katz, C. C., Mueller, A. S., Meca, A., Meza, J. I., Miranda, R., Ortin-Peralta, A., Polanco-Roman, L., Singer, J. B., Zullo, L., & Miller, A. B. (2023). Culturally responsive assessment of suicidal thoughts and behaviors in youth of color. *American Psychologist*, 78(7), 842–855. <https://doi.org/10.1037/amp0001140>

Talley D., Warner S., Perry d., Brissette E., Consiglio F., Capri R., Violano P., & Coker K. (2021). Understanding situational factors and conditions contributing to suicide among Black youth and young adults *Aggression and Violent Behavior*, 2021 (58).

<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1359178921000689>