

To: All PerformCare Providers
From: PerformCare
Date: May 1, 2026
Subject: Suicide Prevention Memo #29: Use of Caring Contacts to Prevent Suicide

As we enter the time of year when most suicides occur, it is important to keep in mind that many of those at risk for suicide over the next few months are known to the local mental health system. A meta-analysis shows that one third of individuals who died by suicide had prior contact with mental health services while one in five individuals were involved in treatment the month prior to suicide (Louma, LB. et al, 2002).

For these individuals, the standard post-discharge follow up mechanisms may not be effective at preventing suicide attempts. PerformCare offers consideration of caring contacts as a low-cost post discharge intervention that is broadly applicable to diverse populations with a known suicide risk.

Caring contacts differ from standard post-discharge follow-up reminders but can leverage the same benefits of electronic communication platforms used by providers to send text and email reminders. In addition to being brief in nature, the elements of caring contact include:

- **Connection** - Sent by a concerned individual such as a therapist or case manager
- **Care** - Expresses care and concern for the individual's well-being
- **Non-intrusive** - Does not place any demands on the individual

While a meta-analysis found that series of caring contacts lasting up to two years has been found to be most effective, contacts do not have to occur on a prescriptive or rigid timeline (Skopp, N.A., et al, 2023). Furthermore, these contacts are useful under a variety of discharge circumstances: planned or unplanned, outpatient or inpatient and even in periods of ambiguity in the treatment process when the session schedule or clinician assignment has been disrupted. They can also be employed at critical times within the normal course of treatment like immediately following a crisis event or a transition in level of care.

While caring contacts are not a new intervention, they have grown in promotion by JCAHO and as core element of the Assessing and Managing Suicide Risk (AMSR) treatment model promoted by Zero Suicide©. Providers are encouraged to explore opportunities to implement caring contacts as means of suicide prevention.

References

<https://psychiatryonline.org/doi/full/10.1176/appi.ajp.159.6.909>

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