

A Description of Resources Suicide by Ligature

Background

Suicide by ligature, also known as suicide by hanging, involves an individual using items to suffocate themselves.

- Hanging is the number one method of suicide in the County, exceeding firearms, and representing 40% of suicides in the County between 2018-2022^[1]
- Suicide by ligature is very deadly, similar to firearms^[2]
- The majority of suicides by hanging occur in the community, within people's homes and public spaces^[3]
- Asphyxiation "games" that are common among youth encourage them to choke themselves until they pass out, which can lead to unintentional death

Common Ligatures/Ligature Points

- Common ligatures include:
 - belts, ropes, cables, and scarves
- Common ligature points include:
 - beams, trees, ceiling fans, windows, doors/door knobs, and curtain or shower rods
- While these are common, there are still many other items that can be used in the home and completely restricting them is nearly impossible

Resources

There are many resources available in our County and nationally to support you and your loved one through a time of crisis, such as:

Suicide & Crisis Lifeline

For local area codes: 988

For non-local area codes: 1-800-704-0900, Press 1
Free, 24/7 support for anyone experiencing mental health distress, including:

- Thoughts of suicide
- Mental health or substance use crisis
- Just need to talk

Mental Health & Substance Use Services Call Center

1-800-704-0900

Free, 24/7 access to County services, including:

- Specialty mental health
- Substance use treatment or prevention
- Support for survivors of suicide
- General information, grievances, and appeals

Crisis Text Line

Text **RENEW** to **741741** (English only)

Envía **COMUNIDAD** a **741741** (Spanish only)

Free, 24/7 crisis support via text message.

Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) Officer

911

In emergency situations, ask for a C.I.T officer trained in mental health issues

[1] Baker, S. P. et al. (2013). Increase in suicide by hanging/suffocation in the U.S., 2000-2010. *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, 44(2), 146-149.

[2] County of Santa Clara Open Data Portal. ME-C Data Dashboard. (2022). ME-C Cases dataset [Dataset]. County of Santa Clara.

[3] Gunnell et al. (2005). The epidemiology and prevention of suicide by hanging: A systematic review. *International Journal of Epidemiology*, 34(2), 433-442.

For more information, contact
SuicidePrevention@hhs.sccgov.org



Suicide by Ligature: A Caregivers Support Guide

County of Santa Clara
Suicide Prevention Program

Helping a Loved One in Times of Suicidal Crisis

 COUNTY OF SANTA CLARA
Behavioral Health Services
Supporting Wellness and Recovery

Reducing the Risk of Suicide by Ligature

As a caregiver, you can take steps to reducing your loved ones risk for suicide by ligature. A few steps you can take include:

Be Sensitive, Be Brave

- If your loved one is having thoughts about suicide, you can follow the Be Sensitive Be Brave approach:
 - *Be Sensitive:* Create a connection by sharing your worries for them, and actively listen to their current feelings and experiences

"I really do care about you, and I want to make sure you're safe, so let me ask..."

- *Be Brave:* Directly ask your loved one if they are having suicidal thoughts, and connect them with professional help and resources

"Are you having thoughts about suicide?"

- If you are interested in attending a training about this approach, contact evelyn.quintanilla@hhs.sccgov.org

Make a safe home environment

- Reducing common ligatures and ligature points in the home, while understanding that removing ALL ligatures and ligature points is nearly impossible. You can also help your loved one remove other unsafe items from their environment, such as sharp objects and medicines



Use a Safety Plan

- If your loved one has received mental health care during their time in crisis, they should have created a safety plan. It is important to obtain a copy of this plan, and help your loved one use the coping skills and resources outlined in the plan
 - If they do not have a current safety plan, you and/or your loved one can call in/text in the crisis line seen in the resources section of this brochure to obtain assistance with creating a plan and/or use available apps
 - Apps:
 - "Stanley-Brown Safety Plan" on App Store
 - "Safety Net" on Google Play Store

Understand when to choose hospitalization

- We cannot monitor and care for our loved ones 24/7, nor can we remove all ligatures or ligature points from our homes. It can be helpful to bring your loved one to the hospital where they can receive 24/7 care in their time of crisis
 - Hospitalization may be the safest option for your loved one if your loved one is showing:
 - Thoughts about suicide, a plan for suicide, an intention with an exact time/date, and have access to the means for their plan
 - Multiple suicide warning signs
- Your loved one could be kept at the hospital on an involuntary 72-hour hold if they are perceived by professionals as at risk to themselves or others. For adults, this is called a 5150. For minors, it is called a 5585

Suicide Warning Signs

Thoughts / Verbal

- Thoughts/statements that life is not worth living, thinking about hurting oneself, believing that others are better off without them, or having suicidal thoughts

Feelings

- Hopeless, desperate, trapped, unbearable emotional pain
- Abandoned or betrayed
- No sense of purpose
- Sudden mood changes
- Feeling ashamed of oneself

Physical

- Unbearable chronic pain
- Trouble coping with health changes

Behavioral

- Giving away prized possessions
- Impulsive or reckless behavior
- Putting affairs in order
- Increased substance use
- Withdrawing from others
- Not caring for personal hygiene or health

Situational

- Conflict with/rejection from one's family, support system, and/or community
- Exposure to trauma
- Discrimination or being treated unfairly because of who you are
- Not having others who understand you
- Trouble adjusting to a new culture
- Failure to meet expectations