

Recommendations for Safety-Proofing the Home

(For caregivers of children/teens at risk of self harm developed by ACH Mental Health Urgent Services 2008)

1. **Lock up all medications.** Dispense prescription and non-prescription medications to your child/teen and ensure they have swallowed the medication given.
2. **Lock up any sharp knives/scissors.** A toolbox with a lock may be a convenient place to store unsafe items.
3. **Lock up razors.** If you do not feel comfortable giving your child a razor for shaving, you should supervise this activity or provide Nair or another hair removal product for use.
4. **Remove or securely lock up, guns and ammunition from your home/garage.** It is recommended you store bolts, guns and ammunition in three separate locked locations if you are not able to remove them from your home or garage. (Note: local police services can assist with this removal if required).
5. **Prevent access to alcohol/any other sedatives or mind altering substances.**
6. **Prevent access to ropes/cords in the house/garage/sheds, etc.**
7. **Prevent access to poisonous materials/gases.** (e.g. Bleach, Raid, carbon monoxide from car exhaust).
8. **Lock up access to the truck or car keys and lock the garage.** (There are many hazards in garages/sheds, etc.)
9. **Monitor computer use and the sites your depressed/suicidal child or teen is accessing.** (There are sites which provide directions for self-harm).

If your child expresses thoughts of suicide/self-harm:

- Use a caring approach; thank them for sharing these important thoughts. Let them know that self-harm/suicide statements are taken very seriously **because you care**. Ask your child/teen “what would be supportive for you at this time?”
- Check their room for potentially harmful items (when you’re doing a room search, have the child/teen present to prevent feeling of privacy invasion) let them know you are doing this search because **you care** about their safety.
Let your child/teen know that you also care enough about them to closely supervise, be with them and that you will check their thoughts and mood frequently.
- If your child is attending school or an adult supervised activity (e.g. youth group), make a plan with the child/teen beforehand and discuss the importance of letting a teacher/other adult know if they are thinking of suicide and/or have plans. Provide information for how you can be reached.
- Encourage your child/teen to use supports such as talking with parents/therapists/counselors and/or using the 24 hour help lines such as the Distress Centre at (403) 266-4357 or Kid’s Help Line at 1-800-668-6868.

What other help can you access as a parent?

- AHS Access Mental Health at (403) 943-1500 to see a referral to a mental health therapist/program.
- Woods Community Response Team at (403) 299-9699 can be called to come to your home to offer support and assessment for your child/teen and families needs 24 hours/day, 7 days/week.

If you believe your child is at immediate risk for suicide, please bring them to any local Emergency Department ASAP