

Youth who attempt suicide and do not receive appropriate care are at very high risk of further suicide attempts.

### **Crisis Intervention**

Youth who attempt suicide and do not receive appropriate follow-up are at very high risk of further suicide attempts.

The first step in responding to a suicide attempt is crisis intervention. However, once the crisis has passed, the risk of suicide is not over. After-crisis care must address the issues that led the person to consider suicide in the first place. Short-term goals must be set to provide some immediate relief and long-term strategies implemented to pave the way for lasting change. Special considerations should be taken in the school setting.

### **Making changes**

When someone thinks about or attempts suicide, they may have feelings of helplessness and hopelessness that come from thinking their situation will not improve and no one can do anything about it. For them to let go of suicide as a solution, they need to see concrete changes as soon as possible. When helping a youth who has attempted suicide, caregivers need to work with the family unit to ensure positive, realistic and meaningful changes will happen.

Everyone involved should be clear about their roles and the time needed to make significant changes. The youth who attempted suicide must be involved in this process at all times.

### **Ideas for change**

While changes are important, it is crucial that suicide issues and emotional needs are not ignored. A suicidal youth needs to feel cared about, understood, supported, and loved. For ideas about making changes or involving family and friends, call 211 or visit 211alberta.ca for information on community services in Alberta.

# After a Suicide Attempt

### *Example 1: Basic needs not met*

Is the youth living in a safe environment? Do they have food, shelter? Are they safe from sexual, physical or emotional abuse?

Possible solutions: Move to a safe place, get counselling, and provide clothing and food.

### *Example 2: Relationship issues*

Are relationships in school, with family or with peers part of the stress and turmoil the youth feels?

Possible solutions: Ensure the youth has at least one supportive adult who understands and communicates with them on their level. Seek ways to improve communication, recruit a volunteer tutor and find alternative social and recreational opportunities.

### *Example 3: Isolation or disconnection*

Is the youth feeling isolated and alienated from family, friends or the community due to issues associated with minority status, e.g. sexual orientation, Aboriginal.

Possible solutions: Improve communications, recruit a mentor as a positive role model (e.g. LGBT, Aboriginal), find meaningful opportunities for interaction with others.

### *Example 4: Health issues*

Have mental illness and substance abuse been ruled out as contributing factors?

Possible solutions: See a physician for a thorough check-up. Provide referrals to appropriate health care professionals. Seek understanding and alternative coping strategies to deal with issues.