



Communication Tool Kit

PHYSICAL, MENTAL, SPIRITUAL, SOCIAL, FINANCIAL

September (Suicide Prevention Month)



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Vignette: It is the Friday night before drill weekend. You receive a phone call from one of your peers within your unit, and when you answer, you can hear that they have been crying. You ask them what is wrong, and they proceed to say, “Thank you for everything-I just can’t take it anymore.” You ask the SM to clarify and that you are there to listen and help them. The SM reveals that they “just want to end it all and wanted to say goodbye”. Further conversation reveals that the SM has been drinking since 0900 and has already consumed a large quantity of alcohol. SM also informs you that they are holding a bottle of sleeping pills they were prescribed and means to take them so they can “sleep forever”. What do you do?

- A) Try to talk to the SM and convince them that they will regret what they are doing.
- B) Keep the SM on the phone and dial 911.
- C) Tell the SM that you are going to hang up the phone and drive to their house.
- D) Ask the SM if they would be willing to talk to a Chaplain for additional support.

BEST answer: B. This is an active suicide attempt in progress. Keep the SM on the line, continue to talk to them and simultaneously dial 911.

Discussion Q&A:

- What information would you want to get from the SM that you should relay to 911?
- The SM refuses to provide you the address of where they are located-how do you proceed when talking to 911 operators?
- The SM is becoming increasingly upset while you are talking to them and pleads with you to not tell anyone in the unit-what do you say?
- Why would driving to the SMs house not be the best option?
- What are some questions you could ask the SM to keep them engaged with you on the phone until first responders arrive?

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Takeaways:

- The SM has the means and intent to suicide. Time is a precious commodity in this situation and 911 is the quickest way to ensure survival.
- Some pieces of information that you would want to relay to 911 are: whether or not the SM is currently alone, has immediate access to any weapons, an approximate amount of alcohol and type consumed and where they are currently located (i.e. if they are in their house-where in their house?).
- Acknowledge the SMs desire to not let anyone in the unit know about the situation-try to steer the conversation from this and remind the SM that you are there to ensure the SM that help is coming and you want to keep them safe until it arrives.
- Some ideas for keeping the SM engaged are: asking them questions about hobbies they enjoy, remind them of a funny experience you shared while at drill, ask them to tell their story as to what brought them to this point.
- Your role is to keep the SM safe until help arrives.
- Once help arrives and the SM is in care, the best thing you can do for the SM is to inform your CoC. Leadership will follow proper protocols to ensure the SM receives follow-up care and resources to include; sending up an SIR allowing for those in the need to know to obtain information needed that will best serve the SM in receiving long-term care and support.

Follow-Up Resources:

- DPH Line (1-877-504-2358)
- 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline 24/7 call, text, chat
- Army Substance Abuse Program (608-242-3966)
- Chaplain (608-630-1660)
- Vet Centers-for more information on Vet Centers visit: [Wisconsin - Locations \(va.gov\)](https://www.va.gov/locations/)

Feedback From the Field:

We know your time is valuable and we want to thank you for setting aside some time to talk over these topics. Your feedback is highly encouraged and welcomed. We would love to hear your thoughts and ideas as to how well these discussions were implemented as well as how well they were received. For feedback, suggestions or even any success stories that you would like to share, a survey can be completed at:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/SMSD2021>