

The Suicide Network: Who Do You See First?

Your first step can save a life—including your own.

When someone is considering suicide, knowing who to talk to first can be overwhelming. The Suicide Network is a layered system of support—some people help stabilize, others help sustain recovery. You don't need to go through it alone, and you don't need to have all the answers—just know where to start.

Tier 1: Emergency or Immediate Support

- Call 988 (U.S. Suicide & Crisis Lifeline) — 24/7, free, confidential.
- Text “HELLO” to 741741 (Crisis Text Line) — Especially useful if speaking is hard.
- Call 911 if someone has a plan and the means — Request a mental health crisis team if available.
- Tip: If you're unsure, call 988 first—they'll walk you through your options.

Tier 2: Stabilization + Professional Help

- Primary Care Physician — a familiar entry point for referrals.
- Licensed Therapists — provide suicide-specific therapies like CBT-SP or DBT.
- Psychiatrists — for evaluation, diagnosis, and medication.
- School Counselors / Campus Mental Health — key for teens and college students.

Tier 3: Ongoing Relational Support

- Peer Support Groups — local or online (e.g., NAMI, AFSP).
- Spiritual Leaders / Faith Communities — provide belonging and moral support.
- Trusted Friends or Family — listen, help with appointments, offer emotional monitoring.

Tier 4: Postvention / Follow-Up

- Post-attempt care teams — offer follow-up after hospital discharge.
- Therapists trained in suicide bereavement — support for survivors of loss.
- Community-based programs — e.g., support groups for survivors of suicide loss.

Who You See First Depends On...

- Is this an emergency? Go to Tier 1.
- Is the person open to getting help? Start with Tier 2 or 3—whichever feels accessible.
- Is there stigma or hesitation? Begin with someone non-threatening, like a counselor or friend.

Important: The “wrong” person is only the one you never reach out to.