

Table 1: Assessment tool to determine the level of risk of suicide for a young person

During the interview with the young person, investigate each of the areas in the column on the left and CIRCLE THE RELEVANT DESCRIPTION OF THE YOUNG PERSON'S CURRENT SITUATION. In investigating any suicide plan (note 4 below), it is important to use direct questions as the young person is likely to be reluctant to volunteer the information. Direct questioning will not aggravate the risk of suicide but failure to fully investigate, categorise the risk and respond appropriately may result in a suicide that could have been avoided. On the basis of the young person's responses, determine which of the three risk levels: LOW, MODERATE or HIGH, best describes the situation. If there is any risk then proceed with the management plan (Table 2).

Areas to Consider	Low Risk	Moderate Risk	High Risk
1. Personal difficulties Stressful events (pg 28) Presence of mental disorders depression, substance abuse, conduct disorder, psychosis (pg 38) Ongoing life difficulties Significant trauma Sexual identity issues Family difficulties (pg 28) Cultural issues (pg 28) Coping behaviour (pg 29)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No significant stress Mild: feels slightly down Minimal impact but aware of some potential difficulties Minimal impact Only occasional thoughts about suicide Daily activities continue as usual with little change Help available; significant others concerned and willing to help Stable family relationships; personality and school performance Direct expression of feelings and suicidal thoughts associated with distress and active help seeking None or one of low lethality (see 4.4 for lethality) Vague Not available No specific time or in the future Pills or slash wrists Others present most of the time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Moderate reaction to loss or environmental change Moderate: some moodiness, sadness, irritability, loneliness and decrease of energy Having some impact on everyday life Having some impact on everyday life Recurring thoughts of suicide Intentional self-harming without expressed suicidal intent eg: cutting Some daily activities disrupted; disturbance in eating, sleeping, school work Family and friends available but unwilling to help consistently Recent acting out behaviour and substance abuse Acute suicidal behaviour in stable personality Interpersonalised suicide goal ("They'll be sorry", "I'll show them", "I don't deserve to live" or "I want to be with someone who has died") Multiple of low lethality or one of medium lethality; history of repeated threats (see 4.4 for lethality) Suicide among family or friends Some specifics Available, has close by Within a few hours Drugs and alcohol, and car accident Others available if called on 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Severe reaction to loss or environmental change Many recent social/personal crises Overwhelmed with hopelessness, sadness and anger (verbal/physical), feelings of worthlessness Extreme mood changes Delusions, paranoia, lost touch with reality Major concerns, impacting on many areas of their life Major concerns, impacting on many areas of their life May resist help Constant suicidal thoughts Significant disturbances in daily functioning Participation in high risk behaviours (ie: alcohol and drug abuse, potential for accidents etc) Family and friends not available or hostile, exhausted, injurious Significant self neglect Suicidal behaviour in unstable personality; emotional disturbance; repeated difficulty with peers, family Very indirect or non-verbal expression of internalised suicide goal (guilt, worthlessness) One of high lethality or multiple of moderate lethality Several attempts over the last weeks and/or suicide among family or friends Well thought out; knows when, where, how Has means at hand Immediately Gun, hanging, jumping, carbon monoxide No one nearby; isolated
2. Positive resources (pg 29) Family and friends Lifestyle Communication			
3. Previous suicide attempts (pg 29)			
4. Suicide plan (pg 29) 1. Details 2. Availability of means 3. Time 4. Lethality of method 5. Chance of intervention			

(Adapted from Ministry of Education 1997 Young People at Risk of Suicide: A Guide for Schools)