

Parent-Child Assistance Program (PCAP)

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Protocol for Responding to Client Suicide or Self Harm Ideation

The following protocol describes steps to take if a PCAP client:

- Reports thinking of hurting herself in some way or thinking she would be better off dead
- OR**
- Spontaneously reports thoughts of self-harm in any kind of encounter (telephone, in-person, electronic)

Steps to take:

- 1) Ask the client "Do you feel these thoughts are a problem for you OR are these thoughts something you might act on?"
 - YES
 - NO
 - Don't Know
 - Refused

If the client answers "YES", "Don't Know", or refused to answer this question, the PCAP case manager should

- 1) Tell the client "*I am concerned and want to do whatever I can to keep you safe.*"
- 2) Tell the client "*I am not a clinician and am not qualified to evaluate in detail the thoughts and feelings you've told me about, but I do know it's important that you get the right medical attention. I'd like to connect you with my clinical supervisor so you can talk with her, or if she isn't available, I'd like to connect you to a health professional.*"
- 3) Immediately notify your PCAP clinical supervisor, who will work with you and decide next steps to take, e.g., call a mental health provider, who will contact the client on the same day (usually within 8 hours) and who will conduct a clinical risk assessment.

The PCAP case manager should also offer the client THREE telephone numbers in the client's local calling area, including

1. The local 24-hour suicide hotline: _____
2. The number of the closest emergency room: _____
3. The number of a mental health professional in the local area: _____

If the PCAP case manager determines that the client cannot wait and is likely to act immediately on her suicidal ideation (e.g., client has a gun), the PCAP staff member will immediately 1) call the police or mental health professional in her local area who can come to the client's home, and 2) contact her PCAP clinical supervisor.

PCAP case managers are not qualified to conduct clinical mental health assessments or provide mental health treatment to clients.