

Week 6 : Suicide Risk Assessment

Student's Name

Institutional Affiliation

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Understanding and implementing suicide risk assessments is essential for counselors to effectively identify and intervene in cases of suicidal behavior. This assignment provides a comprehensive overview of key terms, risk factors, prevalence within various populations, assessment tools, and practical application to case studies. By exploring these components, counselors can enhance their ability to conduct effective suicide risk assessments and interventions, thereby preventing potential tragedies.

Background of Suicide

Suicide is a complex issue that involves several key terms. **Suicidal ideation** refers to thoughts about self-harm or ending one's life. A **suicide plan** is a specific strategy for how one might end their life, while a **suicide attempt** is an effort to end one's life that does not result in death. It is important to avoid outdated terms like "committed suicide," which can imply criminality; instead, the term "died by suicide" is preferred (Symptom Media, 2019). Understanding these terms is foundational for assessing and addressing suicide risk.

Risk Factors for Suicidal Behavior

Several risk factors can increase the likelihood of suicidal behavior, and these can vary significantly across different cultural and demographic groups. **Cultural aspects** play a crucial role; for example, stigma surrounding mental health issues in certain cultures can lead to underreporting and lack of support for individuals experiencing suicidal ideation. Additionally, **previous mental health diagnoses** such as depression, bipolar disorder, and PTSD are significant risk factors. Understanding these cultural and clinical nuances is essential for effective suicide prevention.

Prevalence/Statistics within Various Populations

Suicide rates and risk factors can differ widely among various populations. For instance, the **LGBTI community** experiences higher rates of suicidal behavior due to stigma, discrimination, and social isolation. **Males** generally have higher suicide completion rates compared to females. The **military population** is at increased risk due to exposure to trauma and high-stress environments (Marchi et al., 2022). **American Indians/Alaska Natives** also have higher suicide rates, influenced by historical trauma and socio-economic challenges. Awareness of these statistics helps tailor interventions to specific populations.

Suicide Risk Screeners and Assessment Tools

Suicide risk assessment involves both screening and comprehensive assessment tools. **Screening** is a brief process to identify individuals at risk, while **assessment** is a more in-depth evaluation to determine the level of risk and appropriate interventions.

Common instruments used in suicide risk assessment include:

- **IS PATH WARM:** Identifies warning signs such as Ideation, Substance abuse, Purposelessness, Anxiety, Trapped, Hopelessness, Withdrawal, Anger, Recklessness, and Mood changes.
- **SAFE-T:** Suicide Assessment Five-step Evaluation and Triage.
- **PHQ-9:** The Patient Health Questionnaire used for screening and assessing depression severity (Jobes, 2023).
- **C-SSRS:** Columbia Suicide Severity Rating Scale for assessing the severity and intensity of suicidal ideation.

Application to Case

For the application of the PHQ-9 to the case of Anna, her responses would be scored based on the frequency and severity of depressive symptoms. Anna's risk factors include a history of depression and recent loss, while protective factors may include supportive family or community connections. The lethality of her suicide plan and details about the plan would also be assessed. Mandated reporting issues must be considered if there is an imminent risk.

Creating a safety plan for Anna involves steps such as identifying warning signs, developing internal coping strategies, establishing a network of social contacts for support, involving family members who can help, contacting professional agencies, and ensuring a safe environment by removing potential means of self-harm.

Multicultural Perspectives

Considering Anna's racial/cultural, gender identity, and sexual identity in the assessment process is crucial. Tailoring the intervention to her cultural background and ensuring that the approach is inclusive and respectful of her identity enhances the effectiveness of the assessment and intervention.

Conclusion

Effectively conducting suicide risk assessments requires a thorough understanding of key terms, risk factors, and assessment tools, along with the ability to apply these in real-life scenarios. By integrating cultural sensitivity and comprehensive safety planning, counselors can better support individuals at risk and work towards preventing suicide. This holistic approach ensures that interventions are both effective and empathetic, ultimately saving lives.

References

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