

APA Practice Guidelines (2016) Recommendations Regarding Assessment of Suicide As Part of the Initial Psychiatric Assessment¹

- Current suicidal ideas, suicide plans, and suicide intent, including active or passive thoughts of suicide or death
- Prior suicidal ideas, suicide plans, and suicide attempts, including attempts that were aborted or interrupted. Include details of each attempt (e.g., context, method, damage, potential lethality, intent).
- Prior intentional self-injury in which there was no suicidal intent
- Current aggressive or psychotic ideas, including thoughts of physical or sexual aggression or homicide
- Mood, level of anxiety, thought content and process, and perception and cognition
- Anxiety symptoms, including panic attacks
- Hopelessness
- Impulsivity
- Past and current psychiatric diagnoses
- History of psychiatric hospitalization and emergency department visits for psychiatric issues
- Current or recent substance use disorder or change in use of alcohol or other substances
- Presence of psychosocial stressors (e.g., financial, housing, legal, school/occupational or interpersonal/relationship problems; lack of social support; painful, disfiguring, or terminal medical illness)
- Trauma history

If current suicidal ideas are present:

- Patient's intended course of action if current symptoms worsen
- Access to suicide methods, including firearms
- Patient's possible motivations for suicide (e.g., attention or reaction from others; revenge, shame, humiliation, delusional guilt, command hallucinations)
- Reasons for living (e.g., sense of responsibility to children or others, religious beliefs)
- Quality and strength of the therapeutic alliance
- History of suicidal behaviors in biological relatives

At the culmination of the assessment, APA also recommends that the clinician who conducts the initial psychiatric evaluation document an estimation of the patient's suicide risk, including factors influencing risk.

¹ From APA Work Group on Psychiatric Evaluation. The American Psychiatric Association Practice Guidelines for the Psychiatric Evaluation of Adults (Third Edition), Arlington VA: American Psychiatric Association, 2016.

See <http://psychiatryonline.org/doi/10.1176/appi.books.9780890426760.pe02#x27954.8322323>. (accessed February 22, 2016) for additional details on the rationale, implementation and evidence supporting the above recommendations. APA Practice Guidelines can also be accessed through <http://psychiatryonline.org/>