

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/>