



**OCCAP**

Oregon Council of  
Child & Adolescent  
Psychiatry

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Dear Colleague:

Did you know that:

- Oregon's suicide rate in 2010, at 15.2 per 100,000 persons, was 35% above the national average.
- The suicide rate in 2010 among Oregon males ages 20-24 was 22.6 per 100,000.
- Suicide ranks as the second leading cause of death in Oregon among youth ages 10-24, and far outranks death rates even from auto accidents in the general populace.
- On average, 45% of all suicide victims nationally had contact with primary care providers within one month of taking their own lives.

Faced with the stark tragedy of suicide among children, adolescents, and transition-age adults in Oregon, the Oregon Council on Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, supported by the Oregon Psychiatric Association, began in 2011 an effort to reduce the death rate from suicide by developing a checklist that facilitates the involvement of families in the care of these at-risk individuals.

Communication between primary care providers and/or mental health practitioners and family members of patients seeking treatment for mental illness improves the quality of care provided to these patients, reduces the risk of suicide and self-harm behaviors, and encourages the use of resources to improve overall outcomes for these patients. Two barriers to applying these practices have been a misunderstanding of the restrictions imposed by HIPAA and other laws, and lack of confidence or knowledge of simple screening tools.

The enclosed document provides a one-page checklist which is non-proprietary and can be modified to meet your practice situation and included with a patient's paper or digital record. It is followed by 6 pages of documentation to justify the actions we are urging you to take. On the last page are links to two good suicide risk screening tools, and citations for documentation.

The checklist will remind you of 9 essential steps to take regarding risk assessment and communication with both your patient and her/his significant support system. It will serve to document that you have in fact taken these steps. And we are convinced that ultimately it will save lives, and may help you avoid malpractice claims.

OCCAP and OPA urge you to copy and/or download the checklist and use it with any patient whom you reasonably suspect may have serious mental illness. If you have any questions, please email OCCAP or call us at 1-800-533-7031.

The complete checklist document and a clean chart copy of the checklist are both available for download at: [http://aacap.org/cs/occap/suicide\\_prevention\\_communication\\_checklist](http://aacap.org/cs/occap/suicide_prevention_communication_checklist)

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ken Ensroth, MD". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the letters "K", "E", and "M" being particularly prominent.

Dr. Ken Ensroth, MD

President, Oregon Council on Child and Adolescent Psychiatry