

Suicide Risk Screening

CHILD AND TEEN CHECKUPS (C&TC) FACT SHEET FOR PRIMARY CARE PROVIDERS

Early identification of at-risk individuals allows for timely support, treatment, and intervention, which can lower suicide risk. Suicide risk screening is recommended for all youth at each C&TC visit for ages 12-20 years.

C&TC standards

General

Suicide risk screening is recommended for all youth at each C&TC visit for ages 12 through 20 years.

For general mental health screening, refer to the [Mental Health Screening](#) fact sheet.

Personnel

A nurse, medical assistant, or another staff member may ask the suicide risk screening questions if the patient is unable to complete the form independently. A licensed health care provider must review and interpret the screening: physician, nurse practitioner, physician assistant, or a registered or public health nurse (RN or PHN) who has completed the C&TC Comprehensive Screening training through the Minnesota Department of Health.

If indicated, a trained clinician must perform a brief suicide safety assessment (BSSA) to determine the appropriate next steps (Hua et al., 2024).

Documentation

Refer to the documentation forms on the [C&TC Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnostic, and Treatment resources](#)

webpage for documentation examples or to use as a template with your electronic medical record.

Procedure

Screen youth confidentially. Explain that anything discussed will remain confidential unless someone's immediate safety is at risk. Refer to [Talking About Suicide Risk with Patients and Families](#) and [Screening for Suicide Risk in Clinical Practice](#).

Appropriate suicide risk screening tools include:

- Ask Suicide-Screening Questions (ASQ)
- Suicide Behavior Questionnaire – Revised (SBQ-R)
- Columbia-Suicide Severity Rating Scale
- Patient Health Questionnaire – 9 Adolescent Version (PHQ-9A)
- Patient Safety Screener – 3 (PSS-3)

Youth who screen positive will need a BSSA, which must be conducted by a trained clinician (Hua et al., 2024). Commonly used BSSA tools include:

- Columbia Suicide Severity Rating Scale (C-SSRS) – Full Version
- ASQ BSSA
- Suicide Assessment Five-Step Evaluation and Triage (SAFE-T)

Refer to [Conducting a Brief Suicide Safety Assessment](#).

Consider creating a [safety plan](#) to mitigate risk.

Importance of suicide risk screening

Suicide risk screening identifies additional cases of suicide risk that are not identified by depression screening (Kemper et al., 2021). Suicide risk screening does not increase the risk of suicidal behavior (DeCou & Schumann, 2018). Young people might keep these thoughts to themselves unless they are directly asked about them.

Firearms are the most common method of suicide among youth (Stangland, 2025). Providers can reduce suicide risk by incorporating lethal means safety counseling (safe firearm storage) into routine suicide risk screening and anticipatory guidance. Refer to [Make Minnesota Safe and Secure](#).

Professional recommendations

American Academy of Pediatrics

Screen all youth aged 12 years and older for suicide risk at least annually (Hua et al., 2024).

Resources

Minnesota Department of Human Services

- [C&TC Schedule of Age-Related Screening Standards](#)

- [Minnesota Health Care Programs \(MHCP\) Provider Manual - C&TC Section](#)

Minnesota Department of Health

- [Child and Teen Checkups \(C&TC\)](#)
- [Mental Health and Suicide Prevention](#)

Other resources

- [Suicide: Blueprint for Youth Suicide Prevention](#)
- [Suicide Prevention](#)
- [Ask Suicide-Screening Questions \(ASQ\) Toolkit](#)
- [The Columbia Lighthouse Project](#)
- [Stanley-Brown Safety Planning Intervention](#)
- [Counseling on Access to Lethal Means \(CALM\) for Pediatric Clinicians \(PDF\)](#)
- [Guns in the Home: How to Keep Kids Safe](#)
- [Secure Gun Storage](#)

For more information

The Child and Teen Checkups (C&TC) program is administered through a partnership between the Minnesota Department of Human Services and the Minnesota Department of Health.

For questions about this fact sheet or to obtain this information in a different format, call 651-201-3650 or email health.childteencheckups@state.mn.us.

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Resource links

- [Mental Health Screening Fact Sheet \(https://www.health.state.mn.us/docs/people/childenyouth/ctc/mentalhealth.pdf\)](https://www.health.state.mn.us/docs/people/childenyouth/ctc/mentalhealth.pdf)
- [C&TC Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnostic, and Treatment resources \(https://mn.gov/dhs/partners-and-providers/policies-procedures/minnesota-health-care-programs/provider/types/ctc-resources/\)](https://mn.gov/dhs/partners-and-providers/policies-procedures/minnesota-health-care-programs/provider/types/ctc-resources/)
- [Talking About Suicide Risk with Patients and Families \(https://www.aap.org/en/patient-care/blueprint-for-youth-suicide-prevention/talking-about-suicide-risk-with-patients-and-families/\)](https://www.aap.org/en/patient-care/blueprint-for-youth-suicide-prevention/talking-about-suicide-risk-with-patients-and-families/)
- [Screening for Suicide Risk in Clinical Practice \(https://www.aap.org/en/patient-care/blueprint-for-youth-suicide-prevention/strategies-for-clinical-settings-for-youth-suicide-prevention/screening-for-suicide-risk-in-clinical-practice/\)](https://www.aap.org/en/patient-care/blueprint-for-youth-suicide-prevention/strategies-for-clinical-settings-for-youth-suicide-prevention/screening-for-suicide-risk-in-clinical-practice/)
- [Conducting a Brief Suicide Safety Assessment \(https://www.aap.org/en/patient-care/blueprint-for-youth-suicide-prevention/strategies-for-clinical-settings-for-youth-suicide-prevention/conducting-a-brief-suicide-safety-assessment/\)](https://www.aap.org/en/patient-care/blueprint-for-youth-suicide-prevention/strategies-for-clinical-settings-for-youth-suicide-prevention/conducting-a-brief-suicide-safety-assessment/)
- [Safety Plan \(https://www.samhsa.gov/resource/988/safety-plan\)](https://www.samhsa.gov/resource/988/safety-plan)
- [Make Minnesota Safe and Secure \(https://dps.mn.gov/divisions/ca/our-work/initiatives/make-mn-safe-and-secure\)](https://dps.mn.gov/divisions/ca/our-work/initiatives/make-mn-safe-and-secure)
- [C&TC Schedule of Age-Related Screening Standards \(https://edocs.dhs.state.mn.us/lfserver/Public/DHS-3379-ENG\)](https://edocs.dhs.state.mn.us/lfserver/Public/DHS-3379-ENG)
- [Minnesota Health Care Programs \(MHCP\) Provider Manual - C&TC Section \(http://www.dhs.state.mn.us/main/idcplg?IdcService=GET_DYNAMIC_CONVERSION&RevisionSelectionMethod=LatestReleased&dDocName=dhs_16_150092\)](http://www.dhs.state.mn.us/main/idcplg?IdcService=GET_DYNAMIC_CONVERSION&RevisionSelectionMethod=LatestReleased&dDocName=dhs_16_150092)
- [Child and Teen Checkups \(C&TC\) \(https://www.health.state.mn.us/people/childenyouth/ctc/index.html\)](https://www.health.state.mn.us/people/childenyouth/ctc/index.html)

- [Mental Health and Suicide Prevention \(https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/suicide/index.html\)](https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/suicide/index.html)
- [Suicide: Blueprint for Youth Suicide Prevention \(https://www.aap.org/en/patient-care/blueprint-for-youth-suicide-prevention\)](https://www.aap.org/en/patient-care/blueprint-for-youth-suicide-prevention)
- [Suicide Prevention \(https://www.samhsa.gov/mental-health/suicidal-behavior/prevention\)](https://www.samhsa.gov/mental-health/suicidal-behavior/prevention)
- [Ask Suicide-Screening Questions \(ASQ\) Toolkit \(https://www.nimh.nih.gov/research/research-conducted-at-nimh/asq-toolkit-materials\)](https://www.nimh.nih.gov/research/research-conducted-at-nimh/asq-toolkit-materials)
- [The Columbia Lighthouse Project \(https://cssrs.columbia.edu/\)](https://cssrs.columbia.edu/)
- [Stanley-Brown Safety Planning Intervention \(https://suicidesafetyplan.com/\)](https://suicidesafetyplan.com/)
- [Counseling on Access to Lethal Means \(CALM\) for Pediatric Clinicians \(https://downloads.aap.org/AAP/PDF/Counseling-on-Access-to-Lethal-Means-for-Pediatric-Clinicians_FINAL.pdf\)](https://downloads.aap.org/AAP/PDF/Counseling-on-Access-to-Lethal-Means-for-Pediatric-Clinicians_FINAL.pdf)
- [Guns in the Home: How to Keep Kids Safe \(https://www.healthychildren.org/English/safety-prevention/at-home/Pages/Handguns-in-the-Home.aspx\)](https://www.healthychildren.org/English/safety-prevention/at-home/Pages/Handguns-in-the-Home.aspx)
- [Secure Gun Storage \(https://besmartforkids.org/secure-gun-storage/\)](https://besmartforkids.org/secure-gun-storage/)

References

- DeCou, C. R. & Schumann, M. E. (2018). On the iatrogenic risk of assessing suicidality: A meta-analysis. *Suicide and Life Threatening Behavior*, 48(5), 531-543. <https://doi.org/10.1111/sltb.12368>
- Hua, L. L., Lee, J., Rahmandar, M. H., Sigel, E. J., Committee on Adolescence, & Council on Injury, Violence, and Poison Prevention (2024). Suicide and suicide risk in adolescents. *Pediatrics* 153(1). <https://doi.org/10.1542/peds.2023-064800>
- Kemper, A. R., Hostutler, C. A., Beck, K., Fontanella, C. A., & Bridge, J. A. (2021). Depression and suicide-risk screening results in pediatric primary care. *Pediatrics*, 148(1). <https://doi.org/10.1542/peds.2021-049999>
- Stangland, S. (2025, September). *Reports detail rising rates of firearm suicides, offer prevention strategies*. American Academy of Pediatrics. <https://publications.aap.org/aapnews/news/32993/Reports-detail-rising-rates-of-firearm-suicides>