## SAFETY PLAN: VA VERSION

### Step 1: Warning signs:
1. _____________________________________________________________
2. _____________________________________________________________
3. _____________________________________________________________

### Step 2: Internal coping strategies - Things I can do to take my mind off my problems without contacting another person:
1. _____________________________________________________________
2. _____________________________________________________________
3. _____________________________________________________________

### Step 3: People and social settings that provide distraction:
1. Name_________________________________ Phone____________________
2. Name_________________________________ Phone____________________
3. Place________________________   4. Place  __________________________

### Step 4: People whom I can ask for help:
1. Name_________________________________ Phone____________________
2. Name_________________________________ Phone____________________
3. Name_________________________________ Phone____________________

### Step 5: Professionals or agencies I can contact during a crisis:
1. Clinician Name__________________________ Phone____________________
   Clinician Pager or Emergency Contact #______________________________
2. Clinician Name__________________________ Phone____________________
   Clinician Pager or Emergency Contact #______________________________
3. Local Urgent Care Services
   Urgent Care Services  Address_______________________________________
   Urgent Care Services  Phone ________________________________________
4. VA Suicide Prevention Resource Coordinator Name_______________________
   VA Suicide Prevention Resource Coordinator Phone_______________________
5. VA Suicide Prevention Hotline Phone: 1-800-273-TALK (8255), push 1 to reach a
   VA mental health clinician

### Step 6: Making the environment safe:
1. _______________________________________________________________
2. _______________________________________________________________

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VA Safety Plan: Brief Instructions

Step 1: Recognizing Warning Signs
- Ask “How will you know when the safety plan should be used?”
- Ask, “What do you experience when you start to think about suicide or feel extremely distressed?”
- List warning signs (thoughts, images, thinking processes, mood, and/or behaviors) using the patients’ own words.

Step 2: Using Internal Coping Strategies
- Ask “What can you do, on your own, if you become suicidal again, to help yourself not to act on your thoughts or urges?”
- Ask “How likely do you think you would be able to do this step during a time of crisis?”
- If doubt about using coping strategies is expressed, ask “What might stand in the way of you thinking of these activities or doing them if you think of them?”
- Use a collaborative, problem solving approach to ensure that potential roadblocks are addressed and/or that alternative coping strategies are identified.

Step 3: Social Contacts Who May Distract from the Crisis
- Instruct patients to use Step 3 if Step 2 does not resolve the crisis or lower risk.
- Ask “Who or what social settings help you take your mind off your problems at least for a little while? “Who helps you feel better when you socialize with them?”
- Ask patients to list several people and social settings, in case the first option is unavailable.
- Ask for safe places they can go to do be around people, e.g. coffee shop.
- Remember, in this step, suicidal thoughts and feelings are not revealed.

Step 4: Contacting Family Members or Friends Who May Offer Help to Resolve a Crisis
- Instruct patients to use Step 4 if Step 3 does not resolve the crisis or lower risk.
- Ask “Among your family or friends, who do you think you could contact for help during a crisis?” or “Who is supportive of you and who do you feel that you can talk with when you’re under stress?”
- Ask patients to list several people, in case they cannot reach the first person on the list.
- Prioritize the list. In this step, unlike the previous step, patients reveal they are in crisis.
- Ask “How likely would you be willing to contact these individuals?”
- If doubt is expressed about contacting individuals, identify potential obstacles and problem solve ways to overcome them.

Step 5: Contacting Professionals and Agencies
- Instruct patients to use Step 5 if Step 4 does not resolve the crisis or lower risk.
- Ask “Who are the mental health professionals that we should identify to be on your safety plan?” and “Are there other health care providers?”
- List names, numbers and/or locations of clinicians, local urgent care services, VA Suicide Prevention Coordinator, VA Suicide Prevention Hotline (1-800-273-TALK (8255))
- If doubt is expressed about contacting individuals, identify potential obstacles and problem solve ways to overcome them.

Step 6: Reducing the Potential for Use of Lethal Means
- The clinician should ask patients which means they would consider using during a suicidal crisis and collaboratively identify ways to secure or limit access to these means.
- For methods with low lethality, clinicians may ask veterans to remove or restrict their access to these methods themselves.
- Restricting the veterans’ access to a highly lethal method should be done by a designated, responsible person—usually a family member or close friend, or the police.