

ARMS Policy: Dealing with a Threat of Suicide or Homicide in Groups

All life is valuable and beloved by God and us. **Any threat or plan of suicide or homicide should be taken very seriously.**

Take the following steps if this occurs while an attendee is in group:

-Call the non-emergency law enforcement number of the county or city the person lives in (find on Google) and report the threat after group. Be prepared to let them know as much information as you know about the person's name, location, etc. If you are uncomfortable with this or do not have access to the Internet, contact the ARMS office.

-After contacting the police, contact ARMS.

- a) Call the ARMS office at 503-846-9284
- b) If no answer, call or text 503-828-4456

Warning Signs, How to Interact and Aftercare

1. Warning Signs to Watch For:

Talking about wanting to die, kill themselves or kill someone else. If someone says this, ask if they have a plan for it.

Looking for a way to kill themselves or someone, like searching online, asking other participants or buying a gun

Talking about feeling hopeless or having no reason to live, trapped or in unbearable pain

Talking about being a burden to others

Increasing the use of alcohol or drugs

Acting anxious or agitated; behaving recklessly

Talking about/showing withdrawing or isolation from others

Showing rage or talking about seeking revenge

Extreme mood swings

Threatening by saying they have a plan to commit suicide or hurt someone else

DO's	DON'TS
Be direct. Talk openly and matter-of-factly about it.	Don't dare her/him to do it.
Allow expressions of feelings. Accept the feelings.	Don't lecture on the value of life.
Keep an eye on how it is affecting other group members. If others are shocked, negative, triggered or encouraging the action, stop the conversation during group & speak to the person afterwards.	Don't act shocked. This will put distance between you.
Be non-judgmental. Show interest and support (in the person).	Don't debate whether actions are right or wrong, or whether feelings are good or bad.
Offer hope that alternatives are available.	Don't offer reassurances that everything will become alright for them.
Take action if needed. Remove means, like weapons or pills.	
Contact ARMS as soon as possible to report any threat, plan or action . If it is a direct, eminent threat on another person's life, call 911.	Don't be sworn to secrecy. Seek support.

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2. Recommended Communication Tips

Acknowledge the Speaker

This can be as simple as a head nod or an “Uh huh.” By acknowledging the speaker, you are letting them know that you are listening to what they have to say and reminding yourself to pay attention to what is being said to you.

Respond Verbally

Asking questions or making statements may help clarify what the speaker is saying. It reminds the speaker that you are listening attentively and that you are here to help them and are truly concerned. Be sure to let the speaker finish talking before asking any questions.

Summarize What You Hear

Reflecting on what the listener is saying is also a positive verbal active listening technique. By repeating, paraphrasing or even summarizing what the speaker has said shows that you are putting in effort to better understand them. Use phrases like; “what I’m hearing is...”or, “sounds like you’re saying...” These tactics can also allow the speaker to hear what they are saying, which may help them find positive reinforcement.

Look the Part

Keeping eye contact, maintaining good posture, and staying focused are key components of active listening and interpersonal communication. Being distracted and unfocused gives the speaker the impression that you aren’t paying attention.

When you actively listen to someone, you are letting them know that you care about what they are saying and can indicate that you are concerned for their health and safety.*

*Suicidepreventionlifeline.org

3. Aftercare for others

For the person who has threatened action:

Know that this person may not feel comfortable returning to group. You have done the right thing by reporting the threat. Life is more important than them continuing ARMS programming.

Any suicide/homicide threats are confidential and not to be discussed with other group members, leaders or church/building staff. They may only be discussed with first responders and ARMS staff. If people have questions or concerns, refer them to the ARMS office.

If they do return to group, do not allow conversation about what happened to take place in front of other group members. Redirect the conversation back to the lesson instead.

For the other group attendees:

Watching your calm and clear response to the threat or action will be the most reassuring to other group members. If they need additional support, please have them contact the ARMS office.

4. Signs that it has affected others:

- A reduction in attendance and absenteeism.
- Attendees may want to talk about it to you or bring it up at another group time. They might also choose to use a sarcastic or cynical comment about the situation.
- Attendees may have been triggered to a bad time in their lives and may no longer feel fully safe at group. Be aware of nervous ticks, signs of anxiety or emotion. If needed, use grounding techniques to help people focus.
- Sometimes, group members are in contact with each other outside of group. Be aware that they may have talked/texted with the person who threatened harm, or other group members about the situation.

5. Aftercare for leaders:

We understand that it is never easy to witness someone threatening harm and neither is it easy to attempt to guide and redirect a conversation that suggests harm to someone. Your health and wellness are very important to us. Please call the ARMS office if you want to talk about any situation or ask for prayer. We are here for you.