

# Different Levels of Safety and Suicide Risk

When assessing safety, you will likely find that individuals are at high, moderate, or low risk of suicide. Here are the essential features for determining their current level of safety.

Level of Risk	Essential Features
<b>HIGH RISK</b>  <i>Low Safety: Those in this category may have difficulty keeping themselves safe.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Suicidal <b>DESIRE</b> <u>with</u> <b>INTENT</b> <u>and</u> <b>CAPABILITY</b></li> <li>Inability to plan and/or maintain safety, limited <b>BUFFERS</b> present</li> </ul> <p>Common assessment elements present:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A plan for suicide</li> <li>Recent attempt</li> <li>Acute symptoms of mental illness</li> <li>Dysregulation</li> </ul> <p><b><u>Additional Considerations</u></b></p> <p><i>Does the individual plan to attempt suicide soon? Are these feelings and experiences normal (baseline) for the individual or are they more intense than usual?</i></p>
<b>MODERATE RISK</b>  <i>Moderate Safety: Those in this category may present similarly to those in the high-risk category.</i>  <i>The essential difference here is the ability to maintain immediate safety.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Suicidal <b>DESIRE</b> <u>with</u> <b>INTENT</b> <u>or</u> <b>CAPABILITY</b></li> <li>Vague or no plan (absence of preparatory behaviors, time frame, etc.)</li> </ul> <p>Common assessment elements present:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>May include many of the same assessment elements as High Risk/Low Safety</li> <li>Includes <b>BUFFERS</b> and ability to plan or maintain their own safety</li> </ul>

For information go to the training Assessing Safety and Suicide Risk. (9/21/23)

Level of Risk	Essential Features
<p><b>LOW RISK</b></p> <p><i>High Safety: Those in this category generally have adequate buffers and are able to maintain their own immediate safety.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Suicidal <b>DESIRE</b> <u>without</u> <b>INTENT</b> or <b>CAPABILITY</b></li> <li>• <b>BUFFERS</b> present</li> </ul> <p>Common assessment elements present:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May include desire elements but few intent or capability elements</li> <li>• Includes buffers and ability to plan or maintain their own safety</li> </ul>

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The **988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline** provides free and confidential emotional support and crisis counseling to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, across the United States and territories.



For 50 years, **Vibrant Emotional Health** has been at the forefront of promoting emotional wellbeing for all people. Vibrant administers the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline, funded by SAMHSA, providing 24/7, free, and confidential support for people in emotional distress across the United States and territories.