



How to Talk to Construction Workers About Mental Health and Suicide Prevention

March 12, 2021



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When to Talk to Construction Workers Safety, Health, Wellness Strategies



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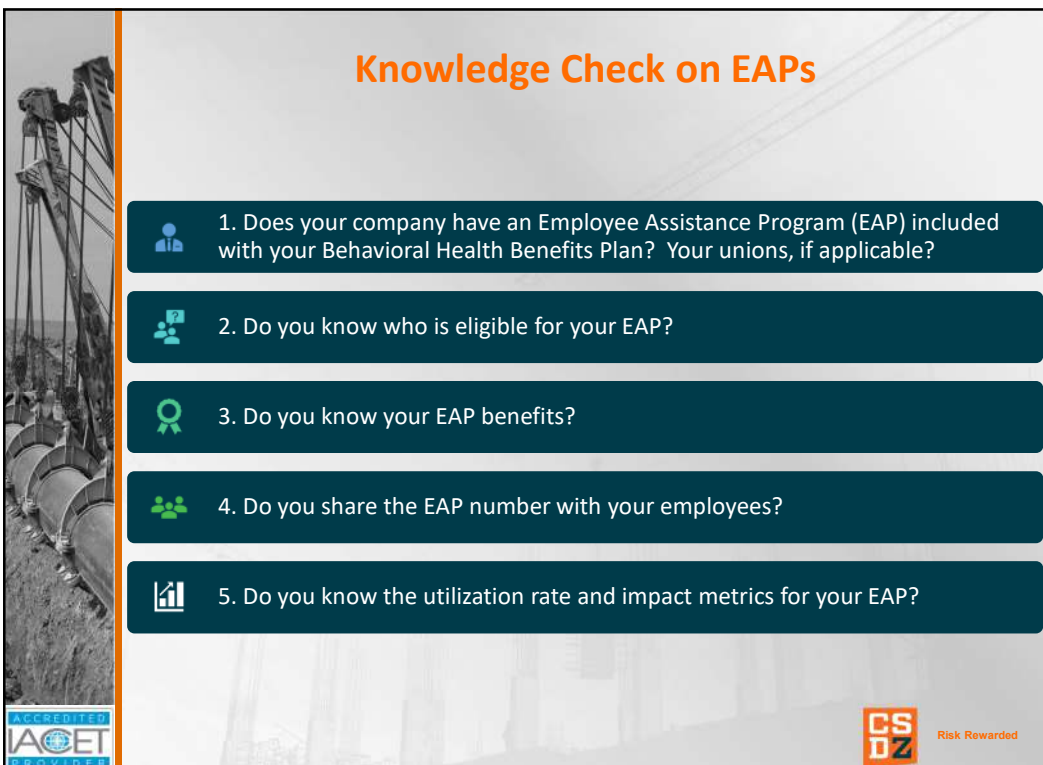
New Hire Orientation Programs/Videos

- ✓ Include behavioral health services and crisis hotlines in the orientation and onboarding process and checklists
- ✓ Discuss Employee Assistance Program (EAP)
- ✓ Share wallet cards and hard hat stickers
- ✓ Incorporate into Job- & Task-Specific Training Checklists by job function
- ✓ Include in Supervisory Safety Responsibilities and Expectations

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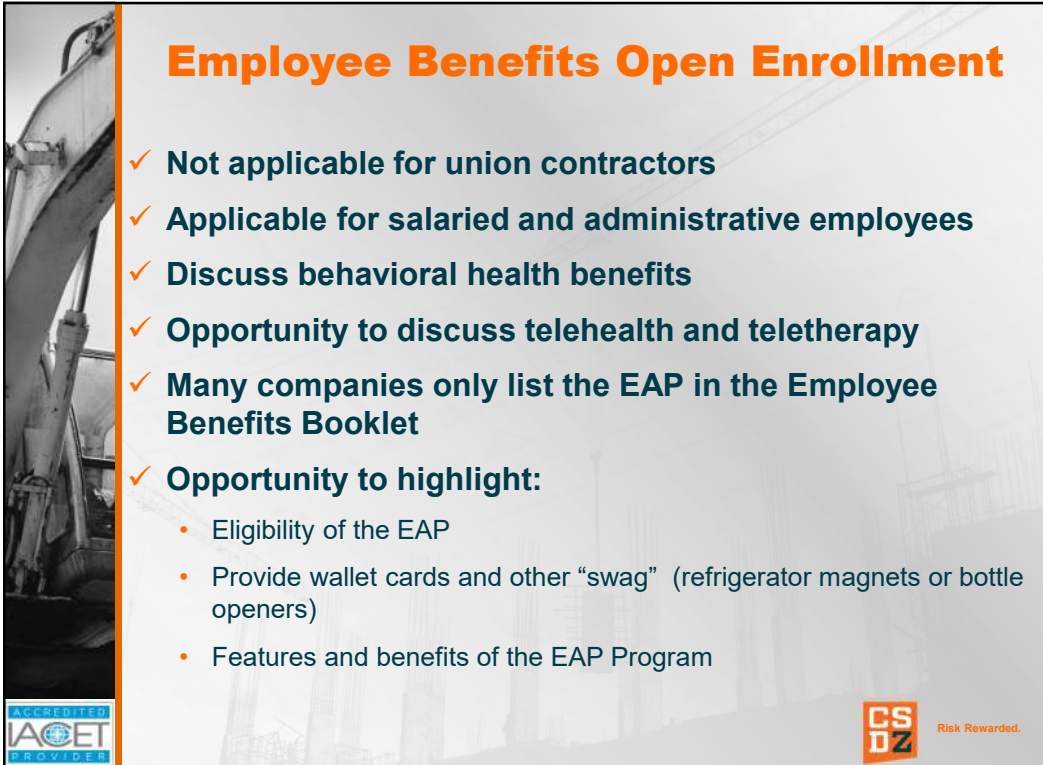
Knowledge Check on EAPs

1. Does your company have an Employee Assistance Program (EAP) included with your Behavioral Health Benefits Plan? Your unions, if applicable?
2. Do you know who is eligible for your EAP?
3. Do you know your EAP benefits?
4. Do you share the EAP number with your employees?
5. Do you know the utilization rate and impact metrics for your EAP?

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Employee Benefits Open Enrollment

- ✓ Not applicable for union contractors
- ✓ Applicable for salaried and administrative employees
- ✓ Discuss behavioral health benefits
- ✓ Opportunity to discuss telehealth and teletherapy
- ✓ Many companies only list the EAP in the Employee Benefits Booklet
- ✓ Opportunity to highlight:
 - Eligibility of the EAP
 - Provide wallet cards and other “swag” (refrigerator magnets or bottle openers)
 - Features and benefits of the EAP Program

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Company Newsletters/Blogs

- ✓ Include contact information for EAP and various crisis hotlines
- ✓ Provide periodic updates on EAP benefits
- ✓ Feature articles about mental wellbeing and behavioral health concerns for all generations
- ✓ Opportunity to spotlight behavioral health providers, social service agencies and local nonprofit partners





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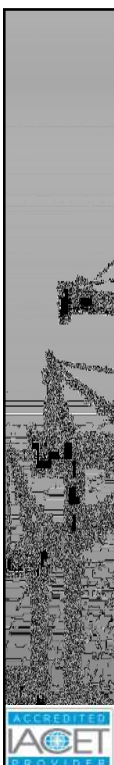
Pre-meeting Safety Moments

- ✓ Share focused safety moments on behavioral health topics and not just traditional safety topics
- ✓ Rotate responsibility to lead the session among team members to make safety discussions more engaging
- ✓ Provides opportunity for discussion leader or participants to share how they discussed behavioral health topic at home, work or in the community.








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Safety Huddles




- ✓ Opportunity to check-in with crew and assess everyone's readiness for work
 - Injury and impairment check
 - Observe and ask employees if they are ready to work without distractions
- ✓ Allow a "safety timeout" if someone needs to refocus

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Toolbox Talks




- ✓ Time-honored tradition
- ✓ Weave in psychological safety and behavioral health topics, especially during COVID-19 with increased stress and anxiety
- ✓ Safe place to address “tough topics”
- ✓ Effective way to continue the dialogue and break down stigma at crew level

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Pre-Season or Project Safety Kick-Off Meetings





- ✓ Reiterate “it is ok to not be ok”
- ✓ Discuss what actions an employee can take if they need help for behavioral health conditions
- ✓ Remind employees about the EAP and that it is confidential, free and 24/7-365
- ✓ Power of “lived experience” testimonials by senior leaders
- ✓ Invite unions to attend and present on EAP for union members

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Safety Stand-Downs





- ✓ Boldly demonstrate leadership support
- ✓ Focuses everyone on the importance of this life-saving topics
- ✓ Reinforces the caring culture of the company
- ✓ Allows for open dialogue on why this issue is so important

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Supervisory and Employee Training Sessions


- ✓ Behavioral health and psychological safety are leadership topics
 - ✓ Build in modules to leadership and supervisory training
 - ✓ Build-in behavioral health into expectations for supervisory safety responsibilities, including performance reviews
- ✓ Look for opportunities to provide training for employees to be “peer supporters”
- ✓ Lunch-n-Learns in the office or during crew meetings to teach warning signs and resources

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LEARN® SAVES LIVES
University of Washington Forefront Suicide Prevention





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LEARN® Saves Lives Method:

- ✓ Look For Warning Signs
- ✓ Empathize and Listen
- ✓ Ask Directly About Suicide
- ✓ Remove Dangers
- ✓ Next Level of Care: Seek Resources

Source: Forefront Suicide Prevention (U of Washington School of Social Work)

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Look for Warning Signs

- ✓ Hopelessness and no reason to live
- ✓ Depression and chronic pain
- ✓ Mood swings, anxiety, irritability, rage
- ✓ Feeling he/she is a burden
- ✓ Social withdrawal and loneliness
- ✓ Sleep problems (too much or too little)
- ✓ Increasing alcohol or substance use
- ✓ Loss, rejection, or humiliation
- ✓ Giving away possessions
- ✓ Talking about death
- ✓ Inflicting self-harm

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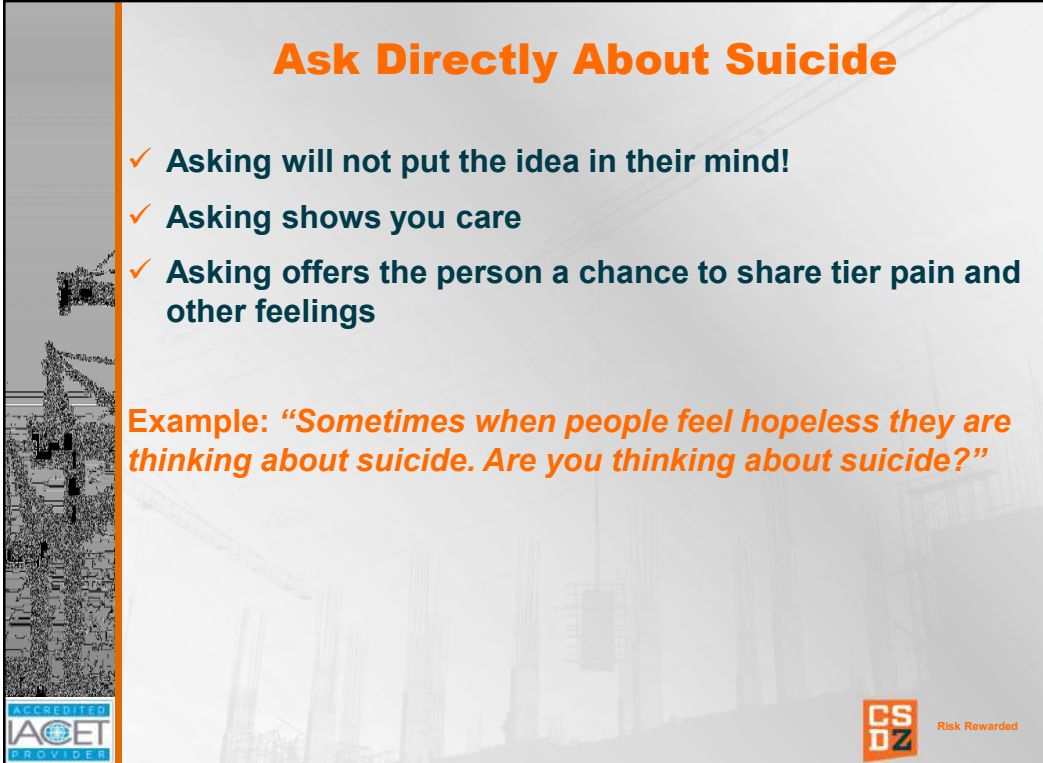
Empathize and Listen

- ✓ Remain calm
- ✓ Offer compassion
 - ✓ *"This must be so hard for you"*
 - ✓ *"I'm sorry you feel the way you do"*
 - ✓ *"I'm here and I want to help you"*
- ✓ Avoid judgement
- ✓ Resist giving advice until you have listened
- ✓ When in doubt, just listen
- ✓ Listen more

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Ask Directly About Suicide

- ✓ Asking will not put the idea in their mind!
- ✓ Asking shows you care
- ✓ Asking offers the person a chance to share their pain and other feelings

Example: *“Sometimes when people feel hopeless they are thinking about suicide. Are you thinking about suicide?”*



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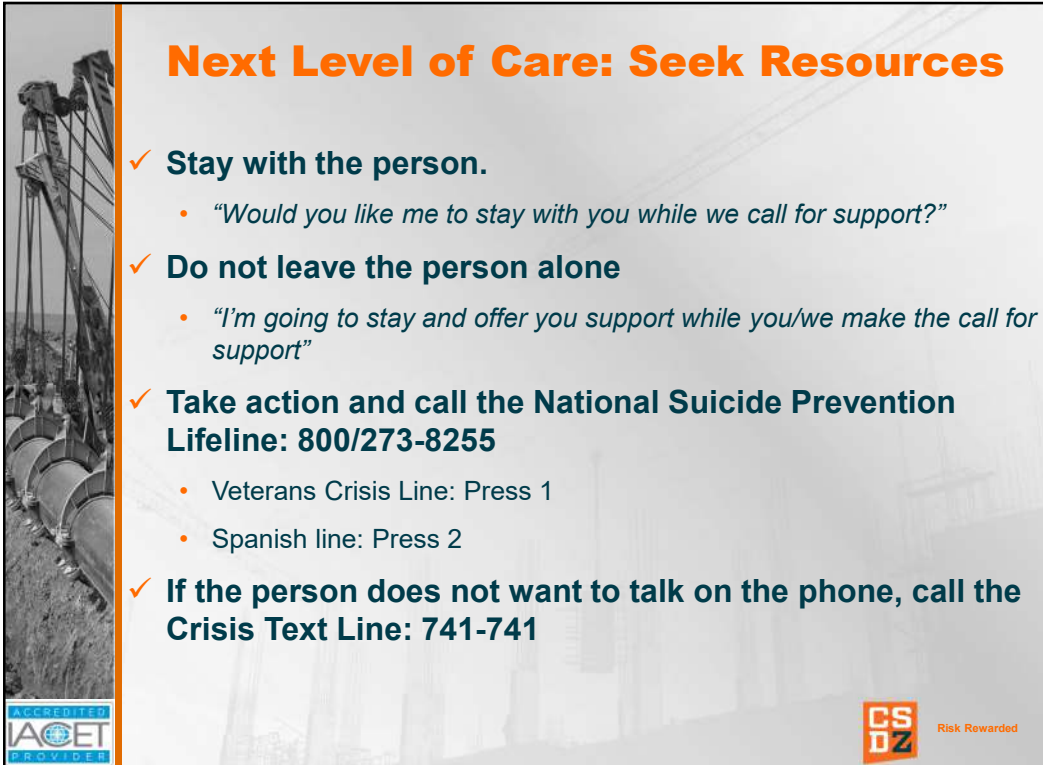


Remove Dangers

- ✓ Safely store or remove firearms
- ✓ Safely store prescription and over-the-counter medications
- ✓ Consider other household items that could be used in self-harm:
 - Cleaning chemicals
 - Belts
 - Ropes
 - Car keys





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Next Level of Care: Seek Resources

- ✓ **Stay with the person.**
 - *“Would you like me to stay with you while we call for support?”*
- ✓ **Do not leave the person alone**
 - *“I’m going to stay and offer you support while you/we make the call for support”*
- ✓ **Take action and call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 800/273-8255**
 - Veterans Crisis Line: Press 1
 - Spanish line: Press 2
- ✓ **If the person does not want to talk on the phone, call the Crisis Text Line: 741-741**

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Contact Information

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