Suicide Prevention Scenarios

1. Latosha was a 15-year-old girl who lived in the Midwest.

Her parents had recently divorced, which forced her to move to a new community of 3,000 people. She hated the small town atmosphere, and didn't make any new friends. Her sister Tiffany, her 'only' friend, was going away to college in the fall, which made her feel even worse.

Latosha was having trouble sleeping, her grades were falling, and she was crying almost everyday. She tried to tell her dad and new stepmom that she was feeling terrible, but they said that things would get better if she would just give it some time.

She gave her sister her birthstone ring, and said she wouldn't need it anymore.

What warning signs were evident?

What could the person have done?

What could friends and family have done?

2. Haley was sixteen and had been dealing with depression since she was 12 years old. She never felt 'quite right' in middle school, feeling like she didn't fit in. She started using alcohol on a regular basis, and then marijuana.

Most of her old friends didn't do this, so she started hanging around with a different group of teenagers. She put herself at risk by having unprotected sex with friends in the group. Since school didn't seem important anymore, she started skipping classes.

She was sinking lower and lower, and thinking that it was not going to get any better. She told her mom that she accidentally threw away her prescription anti-depressant drugs, and needed a new bottle. Her mom got the bottle refilled.

She told her friends that "life wasn't worth living," and said she was going to run away the next weekend. Thinking she wasn't going to be home, her friends didn't call on Friday or Saturday. Her parents found her dead from an pill overdose, Saturday night in the park, after a long search.

What warning signs were evident?

What could the person have done?

What could friends and family have done?

3. Ryan was an 17-year-old who seemed to "have it all." He was popular at school, had lots of friends, and his grades were always straight "A". He was a member of the soccer and golf teamS, and president of a school club. He strived to be the very best that he could, since his father had died and he wanted to be a good example for his younger siblings.

He filled out many college applications, but because of a poor SAT score, just couldn't seem to get admitted to the top colleges. His family thought that he should study harder and retake the test. Ryan started to feel very anxious, sad, and desperate. He told his brother and sisters that "it just wasn't worth it anymore" and went for a drive. His pickup was found, totalled. He had been thrown 50 feet and died instantly of a broken neck.

The officer brought up the fact that it didn't look like an accidental death. His mother denied that it was a suicide, insisting that her son had everything to live for, and probably just fell asleep.

What warning signs were evident?

What could the person have done?

What could friends and family have done?

4. Peter, 16 years old, never did very well at school. In fact, he was barely passing. But he was a very talented musician, and wrote many songs about death and the life hereafter. He changed his appearance, colored his hair, and experimented a little with drugs.

During his 9th grade year, he realized that his feelings about his friends were different. He felt an attraction to his male friends, but never addressed the feelings. He knew that they wouldn't understand, and the worst thing in the world would be to be called a "fag."

He started to use heavier drugs to help him handle the feelings. He bought a gun from one of his new friends. He wrote his last song, "I Found The Way," after a long night of drinking. His dad found the lyrics and gun beside him, as he lay in a pool of blood.

What warning signs were evident?

What could the person have done?

What could friends and family have done?

Writing Condolences

Expressing sadness for someone elses loss can be an integral part of their healing and grieving. It may be a loss that was expected or unexpected. No matter how it happens, it’s not easy to deal with.

For this activity, pretend you are a friend or even an acquaintance of the person who committed suicide. Write a letter of condolence to their family. Writing these letters can be extremely difficult as it is important to be tactful so as to respect the feelings of everyone involved. Here are some guidelines for you to follow.

Guidelines for letters expressing condolences:

* Send out the letter within two weeks of the loss
* Handwrite the letter rather than typing it
* If using a store bought card, write the letter on stationary and include it inside the card
* Write the letter the way you would speak to the person who is receiving it

What to include in the letter:

* Acknowledge the loss and refer to the deceased by name
* Express your sympathy
* Note special qualities of the deceased that you might know
* Note favorite memories of the deceased that you have
* Remind the family of their personal strengths or special qualities
* Offer help, but specific help…not merely, “let me know if there’s anything I can do”
* End the letter with a thoughtful word, hope, wish, or expression of sympathy

If you do not know the deceased or the family well, you may include a shorter version of the letter including an acknowledgement, your sympathy, special qualities or memories, and a thoughtful ending. For the purposes of this assignment, we will write the full letter.

See attached rubric for grading of the letter.

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|  | **Put It In The Mail**  **(5)** | **Needs Some Improvements Before You Send It**  **(3)** | **Rewrite It**  **(1)** |
| **Letter format** | Written in a standard format; includes date, greeting, body, and closing | Has all the parts of a letter, but they are not in the right spot | Missing some pieces of the format |
| **Followed guidelines** | Handwritten and neat on paper or stationary; Written to the recipient from your point of view | Letter may be handwritten but is difficult to read or has many spelling or grammar errors | Typed letter; Did not represent yourself in the letter; used others words |
| **Letter had all appropriate requirements** | Included all 7 requirements and used appropriate examples for each | Has all requirements but poor choice of words OR missing some of the requirements but word choice is appropriate | Letter is missing some of the requirements; Some of the words used do not respect the recipient |
| **Total and Comments** |  |  |  |