



## **How to Conduct a Risk Assessment**

It is true that sometimes young kids truly don't know what they are saying. They don't understand the severity that a joke or "side-comment" could have. They might not understand the meaning of words or phrases.

At the same time, it is important for youth professionals to assess all comments that come with a dangerous context or tone to them.

It's important to listen, monitor, check-in, and ultimately communicate with parents and guardians when a child speaks of self-harm or harm to others.

If a child/youth participant is speaking about **self-harm, suicide, or homicidal thoughts**:

1. Take the participant aside at an appropriate time.
2. Be sure to "record the details" of your conversation with the child.
3. Ask them if you heard them correctly and if they can describe what they mean.

### **< If you determine this isn't a joke >**

4. Ask them to rate the severity from 1 – 10.
  - 1 being the safest, meaning no thoughts or plan
  - 10 being completely unsafe, planned and intent to harm themselves or someone else.
5. Do they have a plan?
  - If so, what is the that plan?
6. Do they have intent?
  - What is their intent to follow through with this plan?

7. Do they have access to anything to be able to follow through with this plan?
8. Can they keep themselves safe?
  - Ask about protective factors, what is keeping them from harming themselves? (This could be parents, pets, friends, school, etc...)
9. Can they communicate how safe they feel with parents, or a safe adult, etc...?

If the answers are YES to questions 5,6,7 - then call the parents/guardians and ask them to come and get the child and direct them to the nearest emergency room to get a suicide assessment from a professional.

If the answers are less clear, be sure to record the details of your conversation and share with parents or guardians with a phone call or at dismissal so that they can assess the severity of the situation for their child and determine an appropriate course of action.