

# SUICIDE PREVENTION TOOLBOX

MEN WITH A CRIMINAL RECORD

# MEN WITH A CRIMINAL RECORD

Men who encounter legal problems that could lead to a prison sentence or who have spent time in prison may be more prone to feelings of shame and guilt. **They may therefore consider suicide as a way to end their suffering and the stigma they experience.**





## BE VIGILANT

What are the signs of suicidal distress? What are the risk factors to watch out for?

### PSYCHOLOGICAL AND IDENTITY RISK FACTORS

- **Feelings of guilt or shame (self-blame, negative self-talk)**
- **Social labeling (use of vocabulary such as "ex-convict" or "criminal") affecting self-esteem**
- **Post-traumatic stress disorder: anxiety, hypervigilance, sleep disorders, altered perception of time**
- **Loss of meaning due to confinement or length of sentence**

### SOCIAL AND RELATIONAL RISK FACTORS

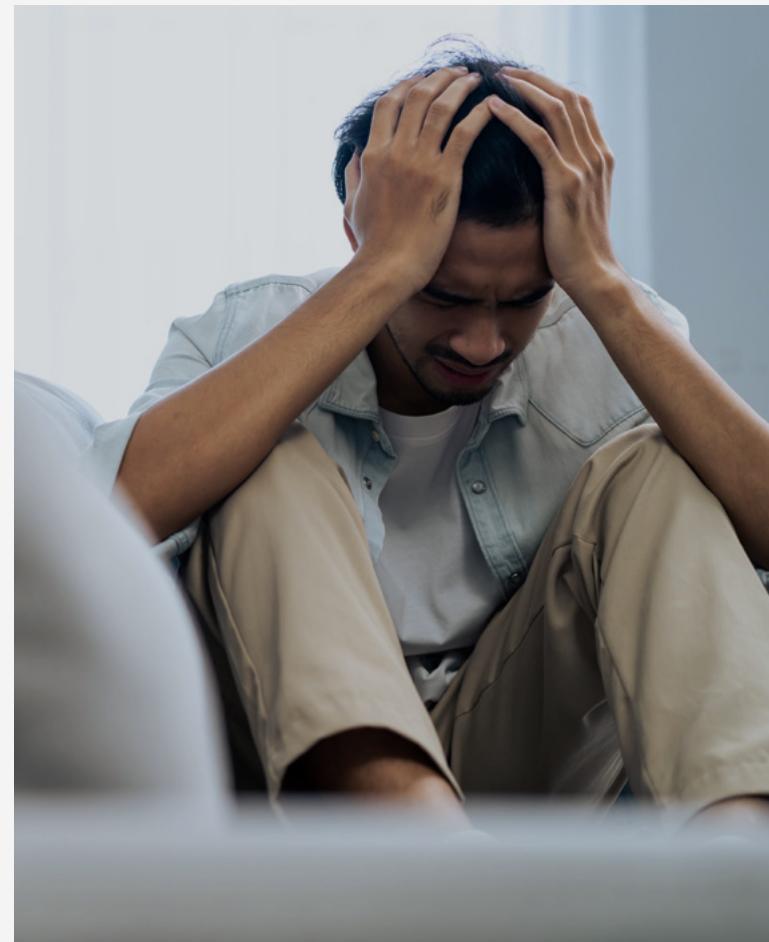
- **Social isolation, rejection by family, friends, or society**
- **Stigmatization (exclusion due to criminal record)**
- **Changes in relationships (separation, estrangement from family)**
- **Lack of support and guidance (difficulties in reintegration, feelings of failure)**

### CONTEXTUAL AND ECONOMIC RISK FACTORS

- **Changes in living situation (job loss, precariousness, unstable housing)**
- **Anxiety-inducing waiting (ongoing trial, parole, other legal proceedings)**
- **Reduced spatial mobility (geographical constraints limiting opportunities for reorientation or social connection)**

### SIGNS OF SUICIDAL DISTRESS

- **Behavioral changes (irritability, aggression, withdrawal, pessimistic speech)**
- **Social isolation (withdrawal from interactions, feelings of exclusion or abandonment)**
- **Self-deprecating speech (shame, guilt, self-blame)**
- **Loss of meaning (feeling that life has no purpose)**
- **Substance use (increased use to alleviate suffering)**
- **Appearance or worsening of psychological disorders (anxiety, disorientation, sleep disorders)**
- **Lack of vision for the future (despair, absence of plans or projects)**



# EMPATHY AND ACTIVE LISTENING TO FUEL HOPE

**What are the best practices for reaching out to men in the justice system to listen to them and encourage them to seek help?**

- Create a non-judgmental space (welcome them with respect for their dignity)
- Listen beyond behavior: look for the root causes of criminalization
- Value strengths, efforts to change (rehabilitation journey), and the complexity of each individual's trajectory
- Value each action taken as a success
- Normalize vulnerability and encourage seeking help
- Avoid moralizing or punitive attitudes
- Recognize the potential for change, even after past mistakes
- Work collaboratively, empowering without blaming



## SUPPORT

**What are the best practices for encouraging them to use resources?**



REDUCE BARRIERS TO ACCESSING SERVICES (FLEXIBLE HOURS, ACCESSIBILITY)



INDIVIDUALIZED SUPPORT TAILORED TO THE PERSON'S PACE



FOSTER A CLIMATE OF TRUST (TRANSPARENCY, CONSISTENCY, CONFIDENTIALITY)



WORK ON THE IMPACTS OF CONFINEMENT (LOSS OF INDEPENDENCE, MANAGING EMOTIONS, SOCIALIZATION)



INVOLVE PROFESSIONALS WITH PERSONAL OR DIRECT EXPERIENCE



ADOPT A MOTIVATIONAL APPROACH (TO RESTORE HOPE AND SUPPORT THE PERSON IN MAKING CHANGES)



BE MINDFUL OF THE VOCABULARY USED (AVOID STIGMATIZING TERMS SUCH AS "OFFENDER," "EX-CONVICT")



OFFER A VARIETY OF RESOURCES (INDIVIDUAL SUPPORT, DISCUSSION GROUPS, COMMUNITY SUPPORT)



RESPECT THE PERSON'S PACE WHILE MAINTAINING ACTIVE ENGAGEMENT



# PROTECT YOURSELF

What protective factors should be put in place to reduce risky behavior?

What would an action plan or safety plan look like for a man who has been in trouble with the law?

1. Strengthen the protective factors identified by the person (check links with family and friends and strengthen links with the community)
2. Reduce or eliminate the risk factors identified by the person
3. Identify critical moments (court appearances, family gatherings, job interviews)
4. Establish a plan with achievable goals (promotes a sense of accomplishment and increases self-esteem)
5. Maintain or rebuild family and social ties
6. Access to stable and secure housing
7. Integration into social or professional reintegration programs
8. Participation in support or empowerment groups
9. Access to appropriate mental health and addiction services
10. Development of personal identity outside the justice system
11. Sense of purpose and contribution (employment, volunteering, parenting)



Usefull resources

# SUICIDE PREVENTION TOOLBOX

MEN WITH A CRIMINAL RECORD

2025 ©ROHIM



Centre de prévention  
du suicide de Montréal



Regroupement des Organismes  
pour Hommes de l'Île de Montréal



Pères Séparés Inc.  
Separated Fathers Inc.

