



SUICIDE PREVENTION TOOLBOX

**MEN
EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS**

MEN EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS

In Montreal, around 75% of people experiencing homelessness are men, or 3,520 men according to the MSSS count for 2022. The causes of this unfortunate reality are numerous, complex and multifactorial.

In a report published in 2023, a team of researchers pointed out that the transition to homelessness among men can be the result of a precarious economic situation, incarceration, the death of a spouse, marital breakdown and/or the absence of a social network. Although we have no direct data on the number of suicides among men experiencing homelessness, data from the Montreal Public Health Department indicates that:



“Montrealers living in more socially disadvantaged areas have a suicide rate about two and a half times higher than those living in more advantaged areas.”





BEING VIGILANT

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

- **A newly homeless person**
- **Recognize hidden homelessness (e.g., living in your car, couch-surfing, etc.)**
- **Significant loss of autonomy**
- **Recently moved into long-term accommodation. This period, although mostly positive, can also generate a lot of stress and feelings of loneliness.**
- **Unusual changes, worrisome new behaviour**
- **Perception of intimidation from the public and/or authority figures**
- **Has been the target of aggression**
- **Neglect of physical appearance, which may be because he does not care**
- **Head trauma (e.g. concussion, accident, etc.)**
- **Worsening physical health issues, e.g. foot care, diabetes, etc.**



Recognizing vulnerable events:

- Leaving a support structure
- Medication issues
- Eviction from premises
- Hospitalization



ELEMENTS TO EXPLORE

1. Check for suicidal ideation
2. Exploring if there is any planning (and imminence) of a suicidal act
3. Encouraging help-seeking (such as a suicide prevention centre, crisis centre, psychologist, emergency service, etc.)
4. Creation of a safety net (family, loved ones and professionals as needed)
5. Equipping loved ones (e.g. educating them about the signs of distress, steps to better support the person at risk of suicide, providing information, etc.)
6. Designing and evaluating a needs-based plan with the individual on an ad hoc basis



Welcoming distress (active listening, validation, empathy, highlighting strengths)

EMPATHY AND ACTIVE LISTENING TO NURTURE HOPE

What are the best practices for reaching out to men experiencing homelessness, listening to them and inviting them to ask for help?

- Take the call for help seriously
- Voluntary support, showing non-judgement
- Approach that goes at the person's pace, avoid giving "last chances"
- Informal attitude and approach
- Caring approach, especially in situations involving risk to self or others
- Avoid the professional posture and adopt a more informal, relaxed, semi-directive posture
- Adapt to their language, do not force intervention
- Switch from one topic to another in no specific order
- Do not impose anything or tell them what to do
- Take the time to listen to the person's experience
- Reframe language (e.g., I'm homeless vs. I'm in a homeless situation)
- Avoid references to the police and reassure the person that this is not a service we want to refer them
- Pay attention to your own beliefs and emotions that may arise



SUPPORT

What are the best practices for inviting them to use the resources?



A LOOK AT GLOBAL HEALTH NEEDS

SUPPORT WITH MATERIAL RESOURCES, FOR EXAMPLE ESTABLISH AN ALLIANCE OR A BOND OF TRUST BY GETTING INVOLVED (DOES THE MAN HAVE A TELEPHONE, A WATCH, IS HE ILLITERATE, ETC.?)

CLEARLY EXPLAIN WHICH RESOURCES OFFER WHICH TYPES OF SERVICES

CONTACT RESOURCES BEFORE SENDING THE PERSON ALONG

GIVE AS MUCH CHOICE AND POWER AS POSSIBLE

BE AWARE OF MISTRUST



PROTECTING THEMSELF

What protective factors can be put in place to reduce risky behaviours? What would an action plan or safety plan look like for a man experiencing homelessness?

1. Treatment adapted to the person or situation
2. Harm reduction approach
3. Find a home with no strings attached, a place where they feel at home
4. A reminder of the possibility of a way out
5. Respect their need for space, freedom and autonomy
6. Link with the resource to ensure that the person is taken in charge
7. Provide body care and food
8. Help the person maintain a routine
9. Be aware of cognitive forgetfulness and/or memory loss
10. Reinforce the protective elements named by the person
11. Reduce or eliminate dangerous elements identified by the individual



Useful resources

SUICIDE PREVENTION TOOLBOX

**MEN
EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS 2024**

©ROHIM

CPSM
Centre de prévention
du suicide de Montréal



McGill

Douglas
CENTRE DE RECHERCHE
RESEARCH CENTRE

ROHIM
Regroupement des Organismes
pour Hommes de l'île de Montréal

INSTITUT UNIVERSITAIRE
SHERPA
Immigration, Diversité, Santé

Pères Séparés Inc.
Separated Fathers Inc.



Mdp
MAISON DU PÈRE