

# SACs, Kessler and Suicide Screens (SKS)

## Substances and Choices Scale (SACs)

The SACS screen is used with young people to identify alcohol and drug use and its impact on the young person. The screen can be found in CYRAS.

- ⋮ Is the young person using alcohol or drugs?
- ⋮ Do others perceive alcohol or drug use as an issue for the young person?
- ⋮ Does the young person's behaviour indicate alcohol or drugs may be an issue?

## Psychological distress (Kessler)

This screen gives an indication of a young person's current distress and possible mental health issues.

In the last two weeks, how often did you feel:

- ⋮ So sad nothing could cheer you up?
- ⋮ Worried or frightened?
- ⋮ Restless or stressed?
- ⋮ Hopeless?
- ⋮ That everything was an effort?
- ⋮ Worthless?

Rating Scale (eg. most of the time)

0 – none   1 – little   2 – some   3 – most   4 – all

## Suicide risk

### Identifying risk

Is there any indication that the child or young person is thinking about suicide or significant self harm?

If you are unsure, use the Kessler screen and the following suicide prompt questions to identify whether there is any current suicide risk and if further assessment is required.

- ⋮ How do you see the future?
- ⋮ Do you ever feel that life is not worth living?
- ⋮ Have you ever thought you would like to end it all?

If you do suspect a risk, take immediate action – don't assume that it's not serious:

- ⋮ ensure the safety of the young person with CAMHS and/or TWB support at [help@twb.org.nz](mailto:help@twb.org.nz)
- ⋮ complete a full suicide risk assessment, and develop a suicide risk management plan with TWB support
- ⋮ remember to use the suicide critical risk check (CRC) actions in CYRAS.

### Ask, assess, manage, monitor

- ⋮ **Ask** – use the Kessler and Suicide screen to identify whether there is any suicide risk
- ⋮ **Assess** – use the Suicide Risk Assessment to determine the degree of risk
- ⋮ **Manage** – put a Suicide Risk Management Plan (SRMP) in place
- ⋮ **Monitor** – monitor and record any changes to the SRMP – remember the suicide CRC actions in CYRAS

Where a risk of suicide is evident take immediate steps to ensure the safety of the young person. Record what's happening and consult with the TWB clinical support person and/or CAMHS throughout the above process – especially when considering case closure.

### High risk factors

The following list of potential risks is not exhaustive – check out the Practice Centre to find out more about suicide risk factors.

#### **Immediate/current risk**

- ⋮ Argument with boyfriend/girlfriend
- ⋮ Loss or death of significant other or significant relationship
- ⋮ Transition (including in and out of residence, between YJ and C&P, and discharge from CYF care)
- ⋮ School-related problems – exclusions, chronic truanting, taunting or humiliation from peers
- ⋮ YJ involvement, loss of freedom (incarceration)
- ⋮ Putting affairs in order – making a will
- ⋮ Suicidal ideation, threats to suicide
- ⋮ Previous suicide attempt
- ⋮ A&D use and abuse
- ⋮ Depressed mood and associated symptoms of depression
- ⋮ Hopelessness
- ⋮ Psychiatric illness (including command hallucinations to suicide).

#### **Environmental risks**

- ⋮ Family history of mental illness and/or suicidal behaviours
- ⋮ Death of a friend or family member – especially by suicide
- ⋮ Lack of supportive peer networks.