

# REALISTIC EXPECTATIONS ON SUICIDE WATCHES

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Suicide prevention or intervention programs do not stop suicides but will decrease risks and reduce opportunities for the offender to be successful at his or her attempt to take their lives if implemented in accordance with sound practices and training already established nationwide.

A watch can be implemented on three (3) different levels. The first is a 30 minute watch for the low at risk showing no current or immediate suicide ideations or attempts. The next level is a 10 min watch for those at higher risk and the last level is a constant 1 on 1 watch with the officer stationed right outside the cell with a direct observation view to the patient at all times. This requires extreme due diligence and proper attention to the task assigned.

However, because of poor screening processes there may be little prior notice of those at risk. I suspect this is about a suicide prevention program for those already identified to be placed in such a setting and not just general population. Combining both you must follow best practices or if there is no plan, common sense and awareness of your environment.

The focus on any suicide prevention or intervention program must be based on realistic goals and maintain a positivity of its purpose. Prior case history or the actual observation of body scars or other evidence found by the officer brings up good points as there may be prior unwritten or unnoticed indicators of self harm or suicide attempt scars on the body from past events.

Look out for items that can cause self harm e.g. sharp items razor, metal edges, plastic items either broken or sharpened etc and remove them. Look for ligature items that can be tied to anything to use for hanging or choking.

There are many instruments available and many watches require constant observation without drifting away from their watch stations to go on a coffee break or even a restroom break without being properly relieved.

Remember to issue such auxiliary tools such as well as an issued cut-down tool[small pocket knife designed to collapse when carried or scissors] and provide good training and awareness, alertness and readiness to act are main ingredients to supplement any plan.