DEPARTMENT OF
VETERANS AFFAIRS

Memorandum

Date: August 17, 2022

From: Assistant Under Secretary for Health for Clinical Services/Chief Medical Officer (CMO) (11)

Subj: Update to Use of National Standardized Suicide Prevention Safety Plan Progress Notes (VIEWS 8214920)

To: Veterans Integrated Services Network (VISN) Director (10N1-23)
VISN CMOs (10N1-23)
VISN Chief Mental Health Officers (10N1-23)

1. The purpose of this memorandum is to update guidance[1] related to the use of national standardized Suicide Prevention Safety Plan progress note templates in the electronic health record. The Safety Plan note templates and note titles provide nationally standardized documentation elements for suicide prevention safety plans and are required to be utilized.

2. Collaborative and well-developed safety plans completed between clinicians and Veterans can help Veterans recognize when they are experiencing a crisis and guide them through specific steps to reduce risk. The Department of Veterans Affairs/Department of Defense Clinical Practice Guidelines for suicide risk (2019) recommends the use of safety plans based on Bryan et al. (2017[2]) findings of a decrease in suicidal behaviors and inpatient stays.

3. Recommended training and educational materials, including guidance for which disciplines are able to complete safety plans in the Veterans Health Administration and a Frequently Asked Questions document, can be found in the Office of Mental Health and Suicide Prevention (OMHSP) Safety Planning site.

4. Medical Facility leadership are responsible for ensuring all clinical providers completing and documenting safety plans are utilizing the national suicide prevention safety plan note titles and associated templates in the electronic health record.

5. Clinical questions may be directed to OMHSP, Suicide Prevention Program Field Operations at vhasppfieldoperations@va.gov.

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[1] This document updates and supersedes VHA Memorandum 2022-04-09, *Use of National Standardized Suicide Prevention Safety Plan National Progress Notes (VIEWS 7316620)*, April 13, 2022.
[2] Bryan CJ, Mintz J, Clemans TA, et al. Effects of crisis response safety planning vs. Contracts for safety plan on suicide risk in U.S. Army soldiers: A randomized clinical trial. Affect Disord. Apr 1, 2017; 212:64-72.

Attachment

Attachment

Department of Veterans Affairs
Veterans Health Administration
Office of Mental Health and Suicide Prevention
Operational Requirements for Documentation of Suicide Prevention Safety Plans

Purpose: This document provides updated guidance and requirements for the use of the Suicide Prevention Safety Plan Note templates. VHA Memorandum 2018-06-18, *Suicide Prevention Safety Plan National CPRS Note Templates Implementation*, dated June 1, 2018, required installation of three (3) national CPRS note titles and two (2) note templates to standardize safety planning nationally across VHA. As facilities migrate to the Cerner Millennium platform, staff will be required to utilize the standardized template developed for that platform.

Document Description:
1. **The Suicide Prevention Safety Plan templates include the following in CPRS/VistA platforms**:
   a. The SUICIDE PREVENTION SAFETY PLAN Note Title is a posting with auto-demotion functions. It will also be viewable in the CWAD/Postings section of the CPRS Cover Sheet.
   b. SUICIDE PREVENTION SAFETY PLAN REVIEW/DECLINE Note Title
   c. SUICIDE -PREVENTION SAFETY PLAN – HISTORICAL Note Title is a non-posting demotion target. VHA clinical staff should *not* use this progress note title. When a new safety plan is completed, the previous safety plan is automatically demoted and its title replaced with the SUICIDE PREVENTION SAFETY PLAN – HISTORICAL note title.
   d. VA-OSP SUICIDE SAFETY PLAN Template name
   e. VA-OSP SUICIDE SAFETY PLAN REVIEW/DECLINE Template name

2. **The Suicide Prevention Safety Plan templates include the following in Cerner Millennium platform:**
   a. VA SAFETY PLAN is a PowerForm. This template includes a section for "Safety Plan Documentation Status" which allows for (4) separate but distinct options: completing a new safety plan, updating a previously completed safety plan, reviewing a prior safety plan with no changes, and a patient declining the offer to complete a safety plan.

3. **VHA clinical staff at each facility:**
   a. Safety plan training content is incorporated within VA Skills Training for Evaluation and Management of Suicide (STEMS)[1] that is required of all VHA

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[1] [VHA Directive 1071](#), Mandatory Suicide Risk and Intervention Training, May 11, 2022.

healthcare providers. Staff are encouraged to complete TMS VA-43804 Advanced Training in the Safety Planning Intervention Course to supplement safety plan training. Staff specific guidance for who may complete safety plans may be located on the Safety Planning Resources site https://dvagov.sharepoint.com/sites/VACOMentalHealth/SitePages/Safety-Planning-%26-Suicidal-Behavior-Reporting.aspx.

b. For patients who have a new or updated safety plan, the SUICIDE PREVENTION SAFETY PLAN note template should be completed.

c. For patients who have a current safety plan that has been reviewed and has not been modified, the SUICIDE PREVENTION SAFETY PLAN REVIEW/DECLINE note template should be completed.

d. For patients who decline completion of a safety plan, the SUICIDE PREVENTION SAFETY PLAN REVIEW/DECLINE note template should be completed, including documented efforts made by staff to develop or update the safety plan and the patient's reason for declining, in the "Reason" section of the note.

4. **Instructions for Clinical Applications Coordinators (CACs) at each facility**:

a. Templates are Clinical Reminder Dialogs contained in a Clinical Reminder Update File. The most recent version is found on the National Clinical Reminders SharePoint Install Guides site: https://vaww.infoshare.va.gov/sites/chio/NCRW/NCR/Install%20Guides/Forms/AllItems.aspx

b. For technical questions or problems related to note installation in CPRS, please notify your local Information Technology support to log a national help desk ticket or contact the VA Service Desk and have them submit a national ticket to:

Category: Enterprise Applications

Subcategory: Applications

Enterprise Application: VistA - Clinical Reminder.