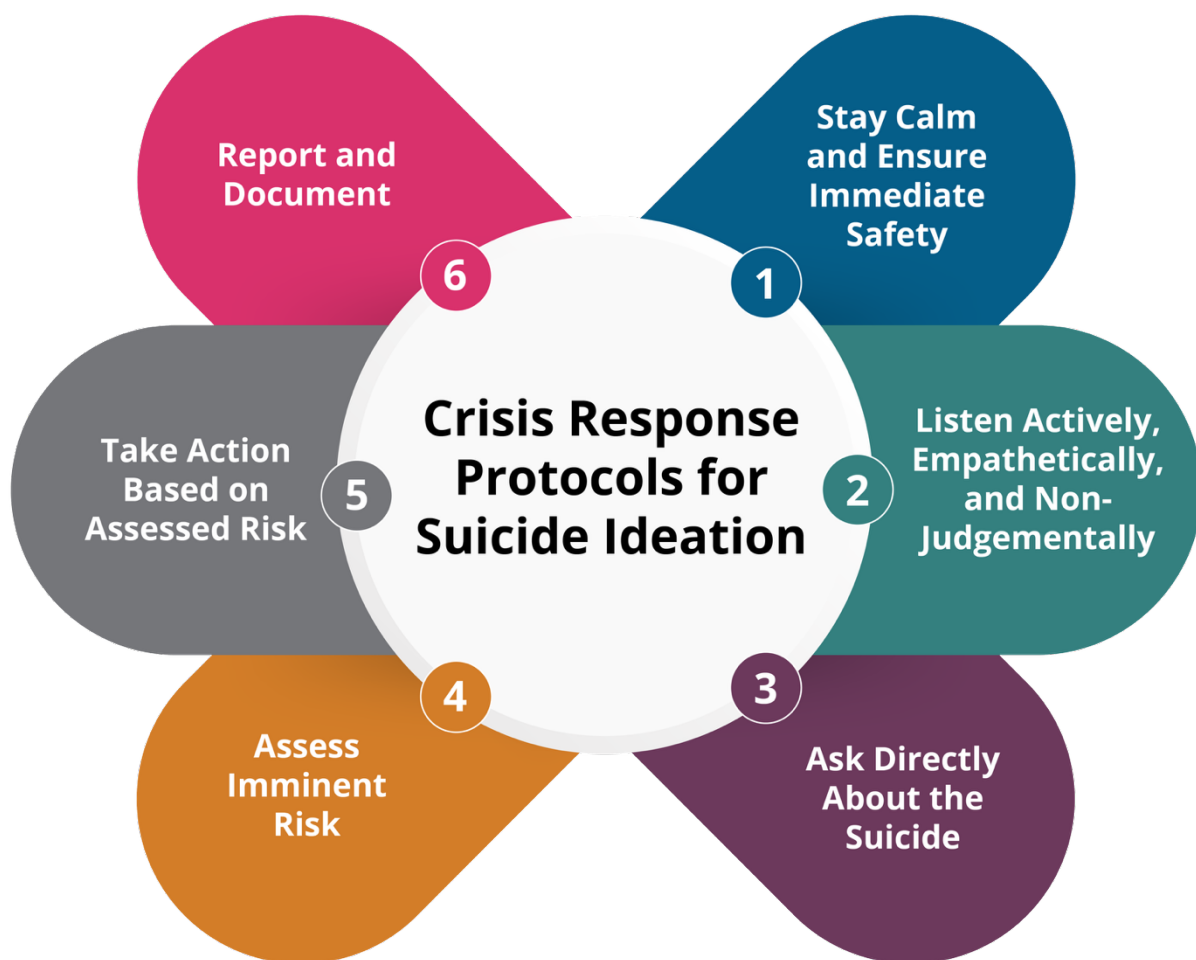


APPENDIX E: SUICIDE IDEATION CRISIS RESPONSE PROTOCOL

The following crisis response protocol is designed to help school personnel respond appropriately and safely when a student expresses suicidal ideation or exhibits signs of significant emotional distress. The protocol emphasizes immediate safety, compassionate communication, risk assessment, and connection to ongoing supports and resources.



The graphic above provides a general overview of the crisis response process. The following sections outline recommended response procedures and considerations for each step.

STEP 1: STAY CALM AND ENSURE IMMEDIATE SAFETY

- Don't leave someone alone if they're in acute distress or have recently attempted self-harm or expressed suicidal ideation
- Contact SBMH staff, the crisis team or MCOT for support
- Make sure the environment is safe and remove any means of self-harm if needed
- Stay calm to help de-escalate the situation

STEP 2: LISTEN ACTIVELY, EMPATHETICALLY, AND NON-JUDGMENTALLY

- Use open and supportive statements:
 - "I'm here for you."
 - "I'm concerned about you."
 - "Can you tell me more about what's going on?"
- Validate their feelings without validating the harmful behavior:
 - "It sounds like you are in a tremendous amount of pain right now."
 - "I can hear how overwhelmed you are."
- Avoid minimizing their feelings, lecturing, debating, or offering simplistic solutions

STEP 3: ASK DIRECTLY ABOUT SUICIDE

- Only staff trained in suicide risk assessment should perform this step, as proper training ensures accurate and sensitive evaluation. Use evidence-based tools to assess risk.
- Direct questioning is crucial. Do not use vague terms. Examples include:
 - "Are you thinking about killing yourself or ending your life?"
 - "Have you ever tried to harm yourself or end your life before?"
 - "Do you have a plan to kill yourself?" (What, where, when?)
- Means: "Do you have access to what you would use?"
- Intent/timing: "Do you intend to act on this plan? How likely is it that you might act on these thoughts? When do you think you might do this?"

STEP 4: ASSESS IMMINENT RISK

- **High imminent risk:** specific plan, accessible access to lethal means, clear intent to act soon, recent attempt, extreme agitation or hopelessness
- **Moderate/lower imminent risk** (any risk is still serious and requires intervention): suicidal thoughts without a clear plan or immediate intent, or self-harm that is not immediately life-threatening but indicates significant distress and requires intervention

STEP 5: TAKE ACTION ON IMMINENT RISK

- **High imminent risk:** Immediately inform parents, administration and/or designated crisis response personnel within your school. Contact a crisis hotline (e.g., 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline – call or text) for guidance, and access direct emergency services. Create a safety plan.
- **Moderate/lower imminent risk:** Encourage and help facilitate connection with professional help. Provide information on crisis lines and mental health resources within the community. Create a safety plan.

STEP 6: REPORT AND DOCUMENT

- **Follow up (follow all school policies and procedures):**
 - Complete incident reports, noting risk level, actions, and notifications
 - Record event timelines, including assessments, interventions (safety plan), and communications with parents and resources provided
 - Keep all documentation confidential and share only with authorized personnel

All levels of risk should be addressed with seriousness. Adhere to state regulations, including [Utah Code Section 53G-9-604](#). When a student expresses suicidal intent, parental notification and suicide prevention education, firearm safety and medication safety materials are required. These resources are accessible on USBE's [Suicide Prevention website](#).