

## 4.6 Significant Self-harm and Suicide Prevention and Intervention

### I. Purpose and Scope

This detention standard protects the health and well-being of ICE detainees through a comprehensive Significant Self-Harm and Suicide Prevention and Intervention Program that minimizes risk.

This detention standard applies to the following types of facilities housing ERO detainees:

- Service Processing Centers (SPCs);
- Contract Detention Facilities (CDFs); and
- State or local government facilities used by ERO through Intergovernmental Service Agreements (IGSAs) to hold detainees for more than 72 hours.

*Procedures in italics are specifically required for SPCs, CDFs, and Dedicated IGSA facilities.* Non-dedicated IGSA facilities must conform to these procedures or adopt, adapt or establish alternatives, provided they meet or exceed the intent represented by these procedures.

For all types of facilities, procedures that appear in italics with a marked (\*\*) on the page indicate optimum levels of compliance for this standard.

Various terms used in this standard may be defined in standard “7.5 Definitions.”

### II. Expected Outcomes

The expected outcomes of this detention standard are as follows (specific requirements are defined in “V. Expected Practices”).

1. All staff responsible for supervising detainees shall receive a minimum of eight hours of training initially during orientation and repeated at least annually, on effective methods for identifying significant self-harm, as well as suicide prevention and intervention with detainees.
2. Staff shall act to prevent significant self-harm and suicides with appropriate sensitivity, supervision, medical and mental health referrals and emergency medical procedures.
3. Any clinically suicidal detainee or detainee at risk for significant self-harm shall receive preventive supervision, treatment and therapeutic follow-up, in accordance with ICE policies and detention standards.  
*\*\*The facility shall be in compliance with standards set by the National Commission on Correctional Health Care (NCCHC) in its provision of preventive supervision, treatment, and therapeutic follow-up for clinically suicidal detainees or detainees at risk for significant self-harm.*
4. The applicable content and procedures in this standard shall be communicated to the detainee in a language or manner the detainee can understand.

All written materials provided to detainees

shall generally be translated into Spanish. Where practicable, provisions for written translation shall be made for other significant segments of the population with limited English proficiency.

Oral interpretation or assistance shall be provided to any detainee who speaks another language in which written material has not been translated or who is illiterate.

### III. Standards Affected

This detention standard replaces “Suicide Prevention and Intervention” dated 12/2/2008.

### IV. References

American Correctional Association, *Performance-based Standards for Adult Local Detention Facilities*, 4th Edition: 4-ALDF-4C-32, 4C-33, 2A-52.

American Correctional Association, *Performance-based Standards for Correctional Health Care for Adult Correctional Institutions*: 1-HC-1A-27, 1-HC-1A-30.

National Commission on Correctional Health Care, *Standards for Health Services in Jails*. (2008): J-E-02, J-E-05, J-G-05, Appendix C.

ICE/ERO *Performance-based National Detention Standards 2011*: “4.3 Medical Care.”

ICE Notification and Reporting of Detainee Deaths Directive, No 7-9.0.

### V. Expected Practices

Each detention facility shall have a written suicide prevention and intervention program that shall be reviewed and approved by the clinical medical authority (CMA), approved and signed by the health services administrator (HSA) and facility administrator, and reviewed annually.

At a minimum, the program shall include procedures to address suicidal detainees. Key components of this program must include the following:

1. staff training;
2. identification;
3. referral;
4. evaluation;
5. treatment;
6. housing;
7. monitoring;
8. communication;
9. intervention;
10. notification and reporting;
11. review; and
12. debriefing.

#### A. Staff Training

All facility staff members who interact with and/or are responsible for detainees shall be trained, during orientation and at least annually. All of the following interests should be incorporated into the required suicide prevention training:

1. Environmental concerns: why the environments of detention facilities are conducive to suicidal behavior.

2. First Aid training: standard first aid training, cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) training and training in the use of emergency equipment (that may be located in each housing area of the detention facility).
3. Liability: liability issues associated with detainee suicide.
4. Recognizing verbal and behavioral cues that indicate potential suicide.
5. Demographic, cultural and precipitating factors of suicidal behavior.
6. Responding to suicidal and depressed detainees.
7. Effective communication between correctional and health care personnel.
8. Necessary referral procedures.
9. Constant observation and suicide-watch procedures.
10. Follow-up monitoring of detainees who have already attempted suicide.
11. Reporting and written documentation procedures.

Requesting that a detainee promise not to engage in suicidal behavior, also known as “contracting for safety,” is not recognized or supported by experts, and is an ineffective method of suicide prevention. “Contracting for safety” provides no guarantee that the patient shall not attempt suicide, and may give staff a false sense of security. This practice is not to be relied on by staff.

## **B. Identification**

Detainees may be identified as being at risk

for self-harm or suicide at any time.

### **1. Initial Screening**

All detainees shall receive an initial mental health screening, by a qualified health care professional or health-trained correctional officer, who has been specially trained, within 12 hours of admission, as required by Standard 4.3 “Medical Care” (Section V.J). The results of the screening shall be documented on the approved intake screening form, which contains observation and interview items related to potential significant self-harm/suicide risk.

### **2. Ongoing Identification**

Detainees also may be identified as being at risk for significant self-harm/suicide at any time while in ICE custody. This identification may be conducted through self-referral or through daily observation and/or interaction with medical staff, contract security staff or an ICE officer. Qualified, on-call clinical medical staff shall be available 24 hours per day for immediate consultation.

### **3. Significant Self-Harm/Suicidal Detainee**

If medical staff determines that a detainee is at imminent risk of bodily injury or death, medical staff may make a recommendation to hospitalize the detainee for purposes of his/her evaluation and/or treatment. If the detainee is mentally incompetent, or is mentally competent and refuses, it may be necessary to petition the appropriate federal court to intervene against the detainee’s refusal for purposes of his/her hospitalization and treatment. In such cases, the local ICE Office of Chief Counsel shall be consulted regarding appropriate further action.

### C. Referral

Detainees who are identified as being “at risk” for significant self-harm or suicide shall immediately be referred to the mental health provider. The evaluation shall take place within 24 hours. Until this evaluation takes place, security staff shall place the detainee in a secure environment on a constant one-to-one visual observation.

### D. Evaluation

This evaluation shall be conducted by a qualified mental health professional which will determine the level of suicide risk, level of supervision needed, and need for transfer to an inpatient mental health facility. This evaluation shall be documented in the medical record and must include the following information:

1. relevant history;
2. environmental factors;
3. lethality of suicide plan;
4. psychological factors;
5. a determination of level of suicide risk;
6. level of supervision needed;
7. referral/transfer for inpatient care (if needed);
8. instructions to medical staff for care; and
9. reassessment time frames.

Detainees placed on suicide watch shall be re-evaluated by appropriately trained and qualified medical staff on a daily basis, with this re-evaluation documented in the detainee’s medical record.

Only the mental health professional, CMA, or designee may terminate a suicide watch

after a current suicide risk assessment is completed. A detainee may not be returned to the general population until this assessment has been completed.

### E. Treatment

Based on the evaluation, as stipulated above, a mental health provider or other appropriately trained medical personnel shall develop a treatment plan to be documented and placed in the detainee’s medical record. The treatment plan shall address the environmental, historical and psychological factors that contribute to the detainee’s suicidal ideation. The treatment plan shall include:

1. strategies and interventions to be followed by the staff and detainee if suicidal ideation reoccurs;
2. strategies for improved functioning; and
3. regular follow-up appointments based on level of acuity.

### F. Housing and Monitoring

A suicidal detainee requires close supervision in a setting that minimizes opportunities for self-harm. If a staff member identifies someone who is at risk of significant self-harm or suicide, the detainee is placed on suicide precautions and is immediately referred to a qualified mental health professional.

The qualified mental health professional may place the detainee in a special isolation room designed for evaluation and treatment with continuous monitoring that must be documented every 15 minutes or more frequently if necessary. Detainees

placed in an isolated confinement setting will receive continuous one-to-one monitoring, checks at least every 8 hours by clinical staff, and daily mental health treatment by a qualified clinician. The isolation room will be free of objects or structural elements that could facilitate a suicide attempt and security staff shall ensure that the area for suicide observation is initially inspected so that there are no objects that pose a threat to the detainee's safety. If necessary the detainee may be placed in the Special Management Unit, provided space has been approved for this purpose by the medical staff and such space allows for unobstructed observation.

Detainees on suicide precautions who have not been placed in an isolated confinement setting by the qualified mental health professional will receive documented close observation at staggered intervals not to exceed 15 minutes (e.g. 5, 10, 7 minutes), checks at least every 8 hours by clinical staff, and daily mental health treatment by a qualified clinician.

### **1. No Excessive Deprivations**

Deprivations and restrictions placed on suicidal detainees need to be kept at a minimum. Suicidal detainees may be discouraged from expressing their intentions if the consequences of reporting those intentions are unpleasant or understood to result in punitive treatment or punishment. Placing suicidal detainees in conditions of confinement that are worse than those experienced by the general population detainees can result in the detainee not discussing his or her suicidal intentions and

falsely showing an appearance of getting well fast.

### **2. Clothing**

Detainees should be provided suicide smocks to wear when medically indicated. Under no circumstance shall they be held without clothing.

### **3. Transfer to an Outside Facility**

Any detainee who is believed to be in need of seclusion, and/or restraint due to self-harming or suicidal behavior should be transferred to a psychiatric facility, if deemed medically necessary to appropriately treat the needs of the detainee.

### **4. Post-Discharge from Suicide Watch**

All detainees discharged from suicide watch should be re-assessed by an appropriately trained and qualified medical staff member at intervals consistent with the level of acuity.

## **G. Communication**

### **1. Transfer of Detainee to ICE/ERO Custody**

Upon change of custody to ICE/ERO from federal, state or local custody, ICE/ERO staff or designee shall inquire into any known prior suicidal behaviors or actions, and, if behaviors or actions are identified, shall ensure detainee safety pending evaluation by a medical provider. The patient's "medical summary report" shall be transferred in accordance with standard "7.4 Detainee Transfers."

### **2. Continuity of Communication Regarding Detainees in ICE/ERO Custody**

Consistent communication shall be

maintained between medical, mental health and correctional staff through a variety of mechanisms to include the following:

- a. intake forms;
- b. daily briefings;
- c. shift change briefings;
- d. medical progress notes;
- e. special needs forms;
- f. medical/psychiatric alerts; and
- g. transfer summaries.

## H. Intervention

Following a suicide attempt, security staff shall initiate and continue appropriate life-saving measures until relieved by arriving medical personnel. Arriving medical personnel shall perform appropriate medical evaluation and intervention. The CMA or designee shall be notified in situations for which referral to the emergency room of a local hospital is required.

## I. Notification and Reporting

In the event of a suicide attempt, all appropriate ICE and ICE Health Service Corps (IHSC) officials shall be notified through the chain of command. The detainee's family, if known, and appropriate outside authorities shall also be immediately notified.

In the event that a detainee dies as a result of a suicide, the Notification and Reporting of

Detainee Deaths Directive shall be followed.

In both cases, medical staff shall complete an Incident Report Form within 24 hours, and all staff who came into contact with the detainee before the attempted suicide or before the detainee died as a result of suicide, shall submit a statement including their knowledge of the detainee and the incident.

## J. Review

Every death that results from a suicide shall be subject to a mortality review process and the Notification and Reporting of Detainee Deaths Directive shall be followed. ICE shall make arrangements to complete a psychological reconstruction of the suicide. The mortality review process shall include review of: circumstances surrounding the incident, facility procedures relevant to the incident, training of staff, medical/mental health reports, identification of possible precipitating factors, recommendations for changes in response to the incident (e.g. policy, training or re-training, counseling, reprimand or discipline of staff identified as failing to follow suicide prevention procedures, physical plant, medical or mental health services and operational procedures).

## K. Debriefing

A critical incident debriefing shall be offered to all affected staff and detainees within 24 to 72 hours after the critical incident.