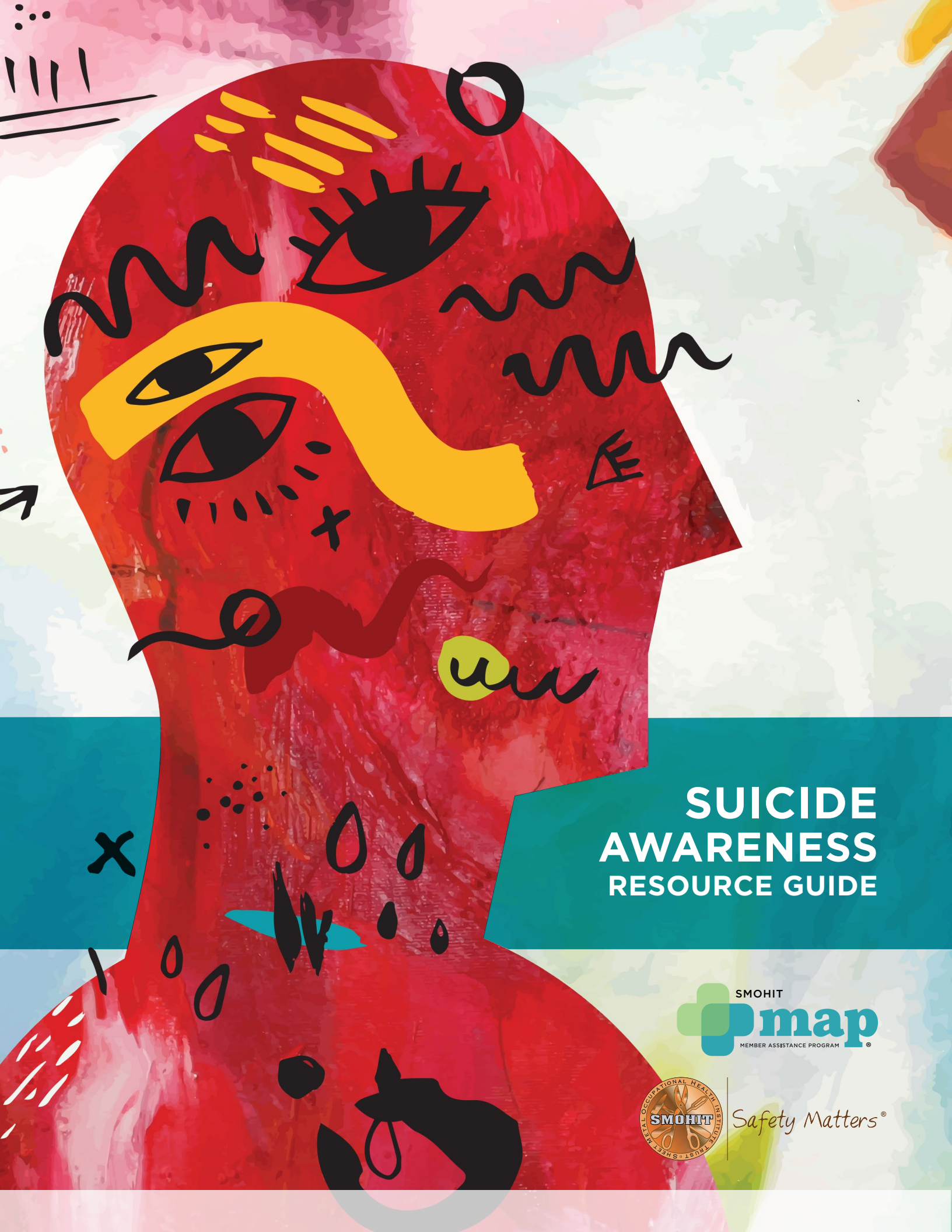




SUICIDE AWARENESS RESOURCE GUIDE



Safety Matters®



PREVENTION

It's incredibly important to address mental health and well-being in all workplaces, especially in the construction industry, which has some of the highest rates of suicide for any industry. The acknowledgment of mental health issues in this sector is long overdue, and it's heartening to see a growing recognition of its significance. While research specific to mental health in construction is still in early stages, adopting practices from other industries and acknowledging the signs of mental health struggles can be a good starting point.

Changing the culture within the workplace is a crucial step. Encouraging a culture of empathy, understanding and support can help individuals feel more comfortable seeking help when they need it. This can involve initiatives such as: promoting open discussions about mental health; providing training for peer support; ensuring supervisors and managers can recognize signs of distress; and creating support networks for workers.

Providing access to mental health resources and support services is essential. This could include offering confidential counseling services, establishing employee assistance programs and providing information about local mental health resources. Making these resources readily available and destigmatizing the act of seeking help will support the mental well-being of construction workers.

A targeted approach must address factors such as substance use, pain and pain management, job insecurity, long hours, physical strain and financial pressures within the industry. Creating safer working environments, implementing better work-life balance practices and ensuring fair wages and benefits can all contribute to reducing stress and improving overall mental health.

Ultimately, addressing the high suicide rate in the construction industry requires a coordinated effort from employers, industry leaders, government agencies and mental health

professionals. By working together to change workplace culture, provide support services and address underlying systemic issues, we can help prevent further tragedies and support the well-being of construction workers.

When leaders openly discuss and address mental health issues, it sets a tone of acceptance and support throughout the organization and may encourage others to seek help when they need it. Leadership's role is key to reducing the stigma surrounding mental health challenges.

Creating a workplace environment that promotes mental well-being involves implementing policies and practices that support employees' mental health needs. As outlined above, this means providing access to mental health resources, offering training on mental health awareness, promoting work-life balance and fostering a supportive and inclusive workplace culture.

By prioritizing mental health and well-being, organizations in the construction industry can improve the lives of their employees while also enhancing productivity, safety and overall job satisfaction. It's essential for leaders in the construction industry to recognize mental health as a leadership imperative and take proactive steps to address it within their organizations.

REFERENCES:

<https://www.preventconstructionsuicide.com/resources>

<https://www.smohit.org/smart-map/smohit-helpline/>



L: Look For Signs

E: Empathize and Listen

A: Ask Directly About Suicide

R: Reduce the Dangers

N: Next Steps



RESPONSE

When responding to a mental health crisis, particularly if the person in crisis appears to be suicidal, the LEARN method can be useful. Each of the letters L-E-A-R-N stands for a step below:

L LOOK FOR SIGNS: Be observant for any potential indicators that someone is struggling with suicidal thoughts or feelings. These signs can vary from person to person but may include changes in behavior, mood swings, withdrawal from social activities or expressions of hopelessness.

Common warning signs of suicide:

- Talking about, joking about or researching death (these signs are often ignored)
- Expressions of hopelessness, depression, anxiety, anger, humiliation or feeling like a burden to others
- Changes in personality, outlook on life, academic/work performance or sleep
- Isolating from others or from daily life
- Increasing abuse of alcohol/drugs, reckless behavior, giving away possessions like tools

E Empathize and listen: Once you've identified signs, approach the individual with empathy and actively listen to what they have to say. Empathy involves understanding and sharing the feelings of another person, which can help establish trust and create a safe space for open communication.

Starting an empathetic conversation can be as simple as saying: "I'm concerned about you. You don't seem like your usual self. What's going on?"

How to show empathy while you listen:

- Listen with compassion. Show them you care by giving your full attention.
- Acknowledge their pain and their feelings.
- Don't judge. Avoid "fixing" their problem. Realize that their perceptions are their reality.
- Use your own words to reflect back what they have told you, and say, "I'm really sorry you're going through this. Thank you for telling me."
- Just listen. Those who have struggled say this helped them the most.

A ASK DIRECTLY ABOUT SUICIDE: While it may feel uncomfortable, asking someone directly about suicidal thoughts or intentions can initiate a conversation about their mental health and provide support.

Asking about suicide will NOT plant the idea in someone's mind.

You can ask directly and calmly, “Are you thinking about suicide? Are you thinking about killing yourself?” Or you can broach the topic by mentioning things you’ve heard the other person say.

You can say, “Sometimes when people are struggling with fears about their future/suffering a major loss/feeling hopeless they begin to think about suicide. Are you thinking about suicide?”

- Please avoid the phrase “hurting yourself” when you ask. This phrase can be misunderstood.
- This conversation may take some time. Be comfortable leaving silence in the air.
- Be prepared to hear a “yes.” If they do respond with a “yes,” the first thing you should do is thank them for trusting you with that disclosure.

Will the person be honest with you? Often, you will be giving this person their first chance to talk about their distress. Many people who experience suicidal thoughts say that talking about it gives them a sense of relief.

R **REDUCE THE DANGERS:** After assessing the situation and understanding the level of risk, you can take steps to reduce the immediate dangers. This may involve removing access to means of self-harm, connecting the individual with mental health professionals or support resources, and ensuring they are in a safe environment.

Remember that young people often know where keys are hidden.

If a person says they have suicidal thoughts:

- Ask these questions, one by one: A) “Do you have a time when you’re thinking of doing this? B) “Do you have a plan?” C) “Do you have access to the method to carry out that plan?”
- Put time and distance between someone at risk for suicide and the method they plan to use.
- Lock up or temporarily remove firearms from their home.
- Lock up all medications, including over-the-counter medications. Leave a one-week supply accessible.
- Lock up belts, ropes, knives and chemicals.
- Report troubling social media posts.

The best way to secure firearms is in a gun safe, lock box or fast-access locking device for a home-defense firearm.

N **NEXT STEPS:** The actions following the initial intervention could involve ongoing support, such as therapy or counseling, developing a safety plan, involving family members or support networks and monitoring the individual’s well-being.

There are three tiers of help available.
Focus on immediate resources first.

Tier One – Immediate crisis resources

Tier Two – Finding treatment

Tier Three – Finding a therapist

How to make the call:

- Connect with one of the crisis resources. Do this together with the person you are concerned about. These resources are free and confidential.
- A trained crisis counselor will listen until they understand the situation, then provide support and share resources that may be helpful.
- Put the appropriate crisis numbers (including the Lifeline and Crisis Text Line) in your cell phone now.
- If possible, make this call on their phone, so the person you are concerned about will have the number in their phone, too.
- Young people can call a trusted adult, including a faith leader, teacher, coach, elder or spiritual healer.
- Remember, not everyone is comfortable calling 911. Use it only in an emergency or last resort.
- If the person in crisis does not agree to stay safe, stay with them as long as you feel it is safe for you.

These steps provide a structured framework for addressing suicide prevention and supporting individuals who may be struggling with suicidal thoughts or feelings. They emphasize the importance of proactive intervention, empathy and ongoing support in helping to prevent suicide and promote mental health and well-being.

REFERENCES:

For more information about Forefront Suicide Prevention LEARN® Skills go to: <https://intheforefront.org/learn-saves-lives/>





POSTVENTION

Postvention is psychological first aid, crisis intervention and other support offered after a suicide. This can help affected individuals or the workplace as a whole, to alleviate negative effects of the event.

Death of an employee by suicide is only one way that suicide could affect the workplace. Losing a client, vendor or family member of an employee to suicide can also have a profound impact.

Union leaders play a critical role in setting the tone for how the rest of the workplace will respond to a suicide. Here are 10 action steps to take when dealing with the aftermath of a suicide:

- 1. Coordinate:** Contain the crisis.
- 2. Notify:** Protect and respect the privacy rights of the deceased employee and their loved ones during death notification.
- 3. Communicate:** Evidence has accumulated that suicidal behavior can be transmitted, sometimes referred to as copycat suicides, and communication can reduce this potential.
- 4. Support:** Offer practical assistance to family.
- 5. Link:** Identify and connect impacted employees to additional support resources and refer those most affected to professional mental health services.

6. **Comfort:** Support, comfort and promote healthy grieving for employees who have been impacted by the loss.
7. **Restore:** Restore equilibrium and optimal functioning in the workplace.
8. **Lead:** Build and sustain trust and confidence in organizational leadership.
9. **Honor:** Prepare for anniversary reactions and other milestone dates.
10. **Sustain:** Transition postvention to suicide prevention.

First, union leaders need to approach the situation with compassion for the bereaved. Public and private communications need to reflect a respectful tone of empathy and support, and people should be granted permission to take care of themselves.

Second, union leaders need to listen carefully to the needs of various employees, as these may differ from employee to employee. Some workers who are more distant acquaintances of the decedent might be able to return to work very quickly, while others may need more time to adjust to the loss. Workers might need to vent anger, guilt, sadness or other emotions, so a structured group session might be helpful. Having counseling staff with coping resources on hand during such group sessions might be useful, in case referrals need to be made to support groups and professional mental health services.

Some workers may express their psychological reactions verbally, while others might express their reactions behaviorally, for instance,

excessive absenteeism or “presenteeism” (being at work but not fully functioning). Managers need to be attentive to all forms of communication and document when it becomes problematic for the workplace. Some accommodations will be warranted given the circumstances, but usually standards of workplace behavior and accountability can be maintained while providing this level of support.

Third, union leaders should set the example in applying union/company policies designed to help surviving family members with practical matters. This behavior will model for others that it is acceptable to reach out beyond the confines of the work environment to help.

Fourth, union leaders should recognize their unique role. They might be impacted by the loss and in need of support themselves, while at the same time they may become targets of anger and blame by other employees. This can be a difficult position, and leaders should take steps to ensure their own well-being so they can remain effective.

Finally, union leaders should be sensitive to anniversaries, notable events (such as holiday parties, traditions the deceased always enjoyed, achieving a milestone on a project to which the deceased contributed) and other major dates that might trigger reactions from staff. During these times, it might be appropriate to again acknowledge the loss.

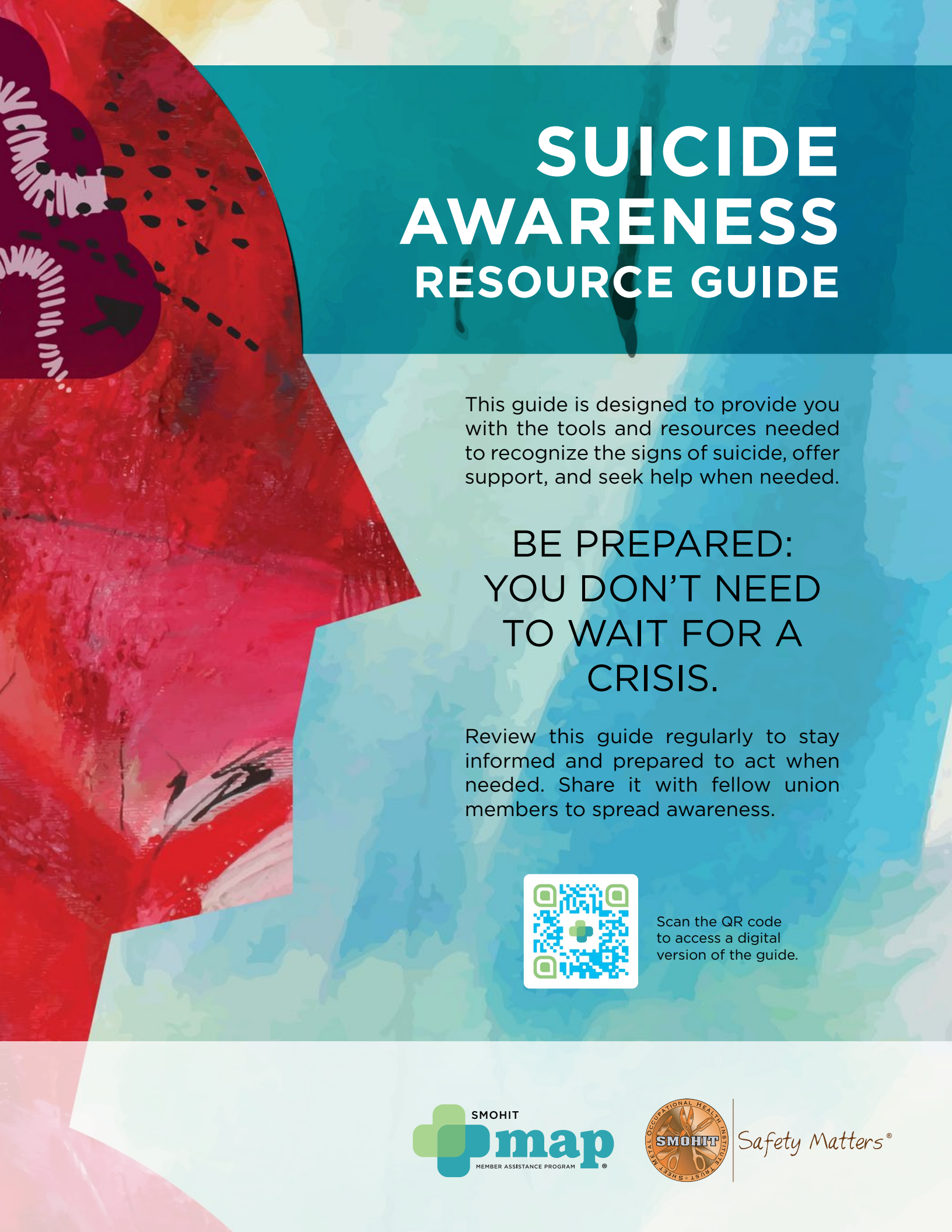
REFERENCES:

“A Manager’s Guide to Suicide Postvention in the Workplace”
<https://theactionalliance.org/sites/default/files/managers-guidebook-to-suicide-postvention-web.pdf>

“The Contagion of Suicidal Behavior”: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK207262/>

“Suicide Contagion and Suicide Clusters”
https://www.suicideinfo.ca/local_resource/suicidecontagion





SUICIDE AWARENESS RESOURCE GUIDE

This guide is designed to provide you with the tools and resources needed to recognize the signs of suicide, offer support, and seek help when needed.

BE PREPARED:
YOU DON'T NEED
TO WAIT FOR A
CRISIS.

Review this guide regularly to stay informed and prepared to act when needed. Share it with fellow union members to spread awareness.



Scan the QR code
to access a digital
version of the guide.



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