



## State of California Commission on Peace Officer Standards and Training (POST)

### Callers in Crisis: Suicidal Callers (WEB)

#### Introduction

In times like these, when the suicide rate is increasing, you may be wondering how best to help those who call 911. What do you say? What do you not say? How do you keep them on the line?

Usually, getting information from callers is a straightforward process: you ask a direct, specific question, and hopefully, they give you a short, specific answer. But most often, suicidal callers need a different approach from you, one which requires that you slow down and take time to establish trust.

In this course, using actual 911 call scenarios, you will learn techniques to build rapport with a suicidal caller in a way that will both help them and help you get the information you need. There will also be reminders about taking care of yourself during and after these calls.

#### Learning Objectives

The course will address the following enabling learning objectives for call takers handling a suicidal call:

- Communicate with callers to obtain the information needed to send responding law enforcement, keep the caller on the line, and secure the scene to ensure safety of the involved parties
- Recognize the mindset of a suicidal caller and how their interpretation of events in their life may be different than yours.
- Use the appropriate tone of voice and empathetic statements and questions to build rapport with the caller.
- Use open-ended, non-judgmental questions to build rapport with the caller.
- Apply active listening techniques such as reflecting, paraphrasing, and minimal encouragers to try to understand the caller's feelings and/or message.
- Maintain a balance between building rapport and gathering critical information about the caller and the scene conditions.
- Keep the caller on the line until responding units arrive.



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## Content Outline

### **Module 1: Sometimes I just don't get why someone would want to kill themselves.**

- Module 1-1: Showing Empathy
- Module 1-2: Give Your Opinion
- Module 1-3: Listen to Another Call Sample
- Module 1-4: Being There with the Caller
- Module 1-5: Making a Difference

### **Module 2: I just want to know what to say... and what not to say.**

- Module 2-1: It Starts with How You LISTEN
- Module 2-2: Choosing Your Words
- Module 2-3: Tone Matters

### **Module 3: How do I talk to callers about their feelings? I am not a therapist.**

- Module 3-1: Reflecting
- Module 3-2: Reflecting in Action
- Module 3-3: Now You Try It
- Module 3-4: Take Time for Self-Care

### **Module 4: How do I get them to give me the information I need?**

- Module 4-1: Open-Ended Questions and Statements
- Module 4-2: You Try It
- Module 4-3: Using Silence and Encouragers

### **Module 5: I've got the info I need and I'm waiting for the officer to arrive. How do I keep them talking?**

- Module 5-1: Finding the Hooks
- Module 5-2: Keeping them on the Line

### **Module 6: This is all really new to me. How can I get some practice?**

- Module 6-1: Listen to a Call
- Module 6-2: Evaluate a Call
- Module 6-3: Evaluate Another Call
- Module 6-4: Take a Self-Care Break
- Module 6-5: Put It into Practice
- Module 6-6: Continue the Practice Call



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### **Module 7: What if I don't say the right thing? Or they hand up? Or kill themselves?**

- Module 7-1: Knowing You Did the Best You Could
- Module 7-2: What Will YOU Do?