

# Selection table for composing a definition of suicide attempts

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The selection table below is intended to help organizations compose a definition of suicide attempts that suits them and their goal. For each theme, column 2 contains considerations that can help determine which element from column 3 should be included in the definition. All selected components from column 3 can then be combined to form the definition.

When making the considerations, the following factors can be considered:

- The convictions of the organization
- Selecting the group of people who need a certain type of care
- Selecting the group or the elements of the definition about which the organization has or can collect data (for example, what someone's intention was is not always known)

1.	2. Considerations	3. Element of the definition
<b>Behavior</b>	The person's own behavior will in almost all cases be part of the definition, to indicate that the person acted and that it did not happen to the person.	Behavior
	To specify the type of behavior, 'potentially self-harming' or 'potentially fatal' can be included in the definition.  <i>This is particularly important when the intention/expectation to die is not included in the definition (see below).</i>	Potentially self-harming (behavior) ó potentially fatal (behavior)
<b>Intention/ expectation</b>	For intention or expectation there are 3 aspects to consider. Make a choice for each aspect:	With at least some (intention) ó with the (intention)
	A) Intention is often ambivalent and can also be short-lived or variable. To allow more room for this variation in intentions, one can choose 'with at least some intention' instead of 'with the intention'.	
	B) The person's wish may not be so much to die, but to stop the suffering. This is partly a semantic discussion. To allow for this, one can choose 'the expectation' to die instead of 'the intention'.	Expectation ó intention
	C) Because of point b, one can also choose 'to stop the suffering' or 'to instigate desired changes' instead of 'to die'.  <i>Then, for 'behaviour', one may choose 'potentially self-harming behaviour' or 'potentially lethal behaviour' instead of only 'behaviour' to indicate the type of behaviour.</i>	To stop the suffering ó to instigate desired changes ó to die
	If it is not important what the intention was, but only that the behavior was potentially lethal, then the part about the intention/expectation can also be omitted.	

<b>Conviction of lethality of act</b>	Some people who attempt suicide do not know (for sure) whether the chosen method will be fatal, for example because they want to let fate decide, do not have sufficient knowledge, or because they have not prepared the attempt, but use what is available. If it is considered important that the person was convinced that the act would be fatal, "conviction" can be added. This can be in combination with expectation/intention or instead of it.	(With the intention/ expectation and) conviction (to die)
<b>Outcome</b>	If it concerns only non-fatal attempts, this can be indicated with 'without a fatal outcome'	Without a fatal outcome
	If it concerns both fatal and non-fatal attempts, this can be indicated as 'with or without a fatal outcome'	With or without a fatal outcome
<b>Injuries</b>	Suicide attempts do not always result in injury. If attempts result in injury, this can be indicated with 'in which injuries were sustained'. An attempt that does not result in injury can be difficult to distinguish from 'preparatory suicidal behaviour' or from 'suicidal plan'.	In which injuries were sustained
<b>Need for intervention/ treatment to prevent death</b>	Sometimes intervention or treatment is needed to interrupt an attempt or to prevent death, but this is not always the case. In the case of attempts where intervention was necessary to prevent death, this may be indicated with 'whereby intervention was necessary to prevent death'.	Whereby intervention was necessary to prevent death
<b>Aborted attempts</b>	Sometimes someone starts an attempt but breaks off the attempt at the very last moment. One can choose to include a provision about this in the definition, so that these aborted attempts are also included. A reason to include them, for example, may be that these people also need psychological care, or because this can be seen as an expression of serious suicidality.	If someone does not carry out the attempt at the last moment, this is/is not considered an attempt. ór ... this is considered an attempt if [condition, e.g. "if someone "had at least some expectation of ending their own life"]
<b>Interrupted attempts</b>	Sometimes someone starts an attempt, but it is interrupted before they could take the final step. It can be chosen to include a provision about this in the definition. A reason to include them, for example, may be that these people also need psychological care or because (some of) these people would have made an attempt if there had been no intervention.	When someone is stopped at the last moment from carrying out the attempt, this is/is not considered an attempt. ór ... this is considered an attempt if [condition, e.g. "if someone had at least some expectation of ending their own life"]

### Questions or comments?

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