

The OD Safety Plan:

Quick Guide for Providers

Using a Problem Solving Approach

Throughout development of this of this plan, assess the confidence patient feels they would engage in the skills or resources identified.

For instance you could ask, “on a scale of 1-10, how likely are you to call your sister if things got bad?”

Look to identify the patient’s barriers, for example
“ok, a 2, that seems low, what prevented you from scoring your that a 3?”

Then, use a collaborative problem solving approach to find solutions, or identify alternatives which can be used in the plan.

Sometimes, a brief role play can help increase patient confidence in ability to employ a skill.

For more information on:

The OD Safety Plan’s 7 steps

Overdose risks and prevention strategies

Accessing the OD Safety Plan

Technical assistance, Research opportunities

Patient and program reviews

OD Safety Plan news and Upcoming events

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Frequently Asked Questions

What is the OD Safety Plan?

The OD Safety Plan is a one page template to reduce risk of accidental overdose. The safety plan is used to outline overdose risk factors, prevention and coping strategies, as well as supports and resources with patients at risk of accidental overdose. The plans are written using patient’s own words and can be used by patients to support continued wellness, or take actions to reduce overdose risk.

Who would benefit from an OD Safety Plan?

Any patient who is identified to have overdose risk factors should complete an OD Safety Plan with their provider. Risk factors include: Prescribed or illicit use of medications with risk of overdose, illicit drug use (including non-opioids), early recovery, suicidal ideation, history of overdose, or recent transition from incarceration or higher level of care like a residential rehab or detox.

How do I to complete an OD Safety Plan?

OD Safety Plans are developed collaboratively by a patient and their provider. This quick guide outlines the 7 steps to develop an OD Safety Plan, as well as suggested questions providers can ask and tips to increase patient engagement in the process.

How is the OD Safety Plan used after completion?

Patients are provided a copy of their safety plan. It is helpful to encourage patients to think about where they will keep it, who they may like to share it with and what could get in the way of its use. The safety plan is also shared with the patient’s care team so that it can be integrated into treatment. Use of the OD Safety Plan should be reviewed at future appointments so that it can be revised as needed and barriers to its use addressed.

Quick Guide for Providers: 7 Steps to Completing the OD Safety Plan

Step 1: Things which put me at risk of accidental overdose

- » Ask “What types of things put you at increased risk of accidental overdose?”
- » Offer additional items known or identified in screenings as well as a brief rationale.
- » List identified risk factors using the patient’s words.
Common risks include: Use of opioid and/or benzodiazepine medications, use illicit drugs (including non-opioids), methods such as injecting or using more than one substance at time, loss of tolerance including early recovery, and health factors such as illness.

Step 2: Actions I can take to reduce my risk of overdose

- » Ask: “What could you do to reduce this risk?”
For each identified risk identified in step one
- » Offer additional suggestions of known prevention or harm reduction strategies.
- » List identified strategies using the patient’s words.
Strategies may range from, “I will continue using my medications as prescribed” to use with less risky means, “I will switch from injecting cocaine to snorting”.

Step 3: Things I do regularly to stay well

- » Ask: “What are a few things you do regularly to stay well, or would like to do more often?”
- » Ask, “What are a few ways you manage stress?”
If patient has difficulty identifying coping skills.
- » Offer additional examples based on knowledge of patient or identified risk factors.
- » Guide patient towards activities which promote health and safety (eg: Engagement in care, 12-step meetings, or avoidance of risks).

Step 4: People who support my wellness and I can ask for help

- » Ask: “Who supports your recovery, such as friends or family you would ask for help?”
- » Ask patients to list several people with contact info
- » Explain that writing down phone numbers increases likelihood they will be used when needed and helpful if they break or loses phone later.

Part Five: Professionals and agencies I can call in a crisis

- » Ask: “Who are central members of your care team would you like to be include in your plan”.
- » Include names, numbers and locations of providers, case managers, peer counselors etc.
- » List contact information of local urgent care services, crisis hotlines, and resources such as 12-step orgs or websites

Part Six: The number one reason I want to live today

- » Ask: “What is the number one reason for living today?”
- » Provide affirmation of patient’s choice.
- » Write it using the patient’s own words.

Part Seven: The next step I am willing to take to reduce my risk

- » Ask: “Now that we have looked at some risk factors, preventions strategies, supports and resources, what is the next step you are willing to take to reduce your risk of overdose?”
- » Provide affirmation of patient’s choice.
- » Write it using the patient’s own words.