



## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ENGAGING PARENTS AND CARERS OF YOUNG PEOPLE INVOLVED IN SUICIDE RESEARCH

Parents and carers are essential sources of ongoing support and guidance for many young people. Researchers are encouraged to use the following recommendations when considering the role of parents and carers when young people with lived experience are involved in suicide research.

The recommendations were developed in collaboration with parents and carers, young people, and researchers. They are intended to be used by researchers in conjunction with the main [Guidelines for Involving Young People with Lived and Living Experience of Suicide in Suicide Research](#). They are not designed to be exhaustive or prescriptive, but rather to be a starting point that can be adapted as needed and feasible. Researchers are encouraged to maintain open lines of communication with participants, parents and carers to ensure a trauma-informed approach is taken to reduce and prevent vicarious trauma.

### ENGAGING PARENTS AND CARERS

- **Inform young people:** Before communicating with a parent or carer of a young person under 18 years, let the young person know that you will do so.
- **Seek permission:** For young people aged over 18 years, ask whether they would like you to communicate with their parent or carer.
- **Be transparent:** Describe to young people what, when, and how you will communicate with their parents and carers.
- **Consider cultural context:** Consider cultural and religious contexts and other socio-demographic factors, and how they may influence parents' and carers' understanding of suicide. Seek advice from experts, such as the Centre for Multicultural Youth in Australia.

- **Support capacity-building:** Recognise that some parents and carers may not initially feel confident or equipped to support their young person, particularly when it comes to communicating directly about self-harm and suicide.
- **Anticipate concerns and address them directly and respectfully:** Prepare and anticipate potential questions and challenges from parents and carers.
- **Work together:** If possible and appropriate, consider parents and carers as allies in youth involvement.
- **Recognise non-traditional carers:** For many young people, kinship carers, siblings, extended or chosen family members play a critical role in supporting them.



## EQUIPPING PARENTS AND CARERS WITH INFORMATION

- Provide parents and carers with information about:
  - **The study or project**
    - Introduce the researchers on the project.
    - Provide a clear overview of the project, including what the young person will be doing and include a timeline of the project.
    - Explain how and when young people contribute throughout the project.
    - Provide evidence that participating in suicide research is not necessarily unsafe or distressing.
    - Acknowledge differing perceptions about suicide across generations, ages, and cultures, and provide information addressing common myths.
    - Describe the safeguards and practical supports that are in place to support young people's wellbeing throughout their involvement.
    - Include frequently asked questions (e.g., will involvement be unsafe or distressing? Will it 'put ideas in their head'?).
    - Provide contact information for helplines and support services.
  - **How parents and carers can support a young person's involvement**
    - Offer guidance on how to support the young person.
    - Detail how to respond to distress, and ways to have supportive conversations.
    - Provide information on how researchers will support young people during their involvement and mitigate potential risks.
    - Outline what support, if any, will be made available to parents and carers and how to contact the researcher.
- **Safeguarding and boundaries**
  - Clarify the limits of parent and carer involvement (e.g., respecting young people's autonomy and confidentiality, especially over 18).
  - Explain how young people's agency is central to consent, participation, and withdrawal at any stage.
  - Provide strategies for when parents and carers seek more information than can ethically be shared.
  - Include guidance on managing situations where parental views may conflict with the young person's wishes.
- If feasible, provide information across multiple platforms and formats (e.g. in-person, SMS links, video, podcast, website, document).
- Consider providing online information sessions at different times of the day, which are recorded for later viewing.
- Provide follow up times for the parents and carers to check in with the researcher.
- Provide opportunities for two-way conversation, including via phone or email, if a parent/ carer has any questions or concerns.
- Communication with parents and carers should:
  - be authentic and personalised in communication, where possible
  - use plain, jargon-free language, avoiding overly formal, clinical language
  - include translated information, where relevant
  - ask them if they need an interpreter and provide this support
- At the end of the project, thank parents and carers for their support and provide a brief summary of the research results to parents as well as young people on conclusion of the project.
- Ask parents and carers for feedback about the information and support provided at the end of the project to inform future project engagements.



## SUPPORTING YOUNG PEOPLE TO ENGAGE PARENTS AND CARERS

- **Provide information that young people can share with their parents and carers, including:**
  - how to describe their involvement to parents and carers.
  - what (if any) identifying contribution from the young person will be shared with parents and carers.
  - if consent is required, how to respond when one parent or carer consents and the other does not, or neither consents.
  - how can young people seek help if their home environment is not supportive and what can researchers do in this event.
- **Consider providing an information session before involvement. Where possible, provide a separate information session for parents and carers, followed by a joint session with both groups.**





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INFORMATION ABOUT  
ORYGEN, PLEASE CALL  
+61 3 9966 9100 OR  
SEND AN EMAIL TO  
INFO@ORYGEN.ORG.AU

ORYGEN.ORG.AU

### ORYGEN LTD

35 POPLAR ROAD  
PARKVILLE VIC 3052  
AUSTRALIA

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