OSCE stations for mental health nursing: suicide safety

OSCE stations for mental health nursing: a suicide screening conversation asks directly about current thoughts and immediate safety, then arranges help according to the person's needs. Use this original practice checklist with your course guidance and supervised skills teaching.

Numbered practice steps

1. Check immediate physical safety first and summon urgent help for suspected poisoning, injury or imminent harm. Introduce yourself, confirm identity and explain the conversation and confidentiality limits. Seek the person's agreement where possible; use hand hygiene before contact without delaying emergency care.
2. Choose a private space where help is available. Ask directly and calmly about thoughts of suicide or self-harm, without suggesting the answer you expect.
3. Explore current intent, any plan, access to means and actions already taken. Suspected poisoning or injury needs urgent physical healthcare as well as mental health support.
4. Ask about previous crises, alcohol or drug use, recent losses and what has helped them stay safe. Listen to concerns rather than treating the answers as a score.
5. If there is immediate danger, get urgent help and remain with the person when safe. Arrange appropriate observation and support through the clinical team.
6. Explain what information must be shared for safety. Give a clear handover and record the person's words, identified needs, actions and who is taking responsibility.
7. Close by checking understanding, ensuring comfort and cleaning your hands and equipment as appropriate. Document findings and hand over any unresolved safety concern to the supervising practitioner.

Common omissions

A denial of a plan does not establish safety by itself. Avoid promises of secrecy, a low-risk label or a promise not to self-harm as a substitute for assessment and care.

Try an original practice task

Ask a partner to express hopelessness in an original fictional scenario. Practise the direct question, a calm response and a handover that describes needs rather than predicting suicide.

These steps support learning, rather than authorising independent treatment. Follow your school's task and local policy; ask for help when a decision exceeds your competence.

Related nursing practice

Return to mental nursing OSCE practice or use the full checklist directory.

For a related communication exercise, try the suicide conversation practice station. Its task and clinical setting may differ from this checklist.

Common questions

Is this a school marking sheet?

No. This is an original learning checklist. Your school sets the task and assessment criteria.

Can I print this checklist?

Yes. Use the PDF download on this page for practice.

Sources

- NMC: The Code
- NICE NG222: depression in adults
- NICE NG225: self-harm, assessment and safety planning

Checked 2026-11-13. Fees and rules change, so confirm them with the regulator before you book.