

**Farm and Ranch Family Stress and Depression:**

**A Checklist and Guide for Making Referrals**[[1]](#footnote-1)

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**signs of farm and ranch stress**

The last few years have been difficult for farm and ranch families. Many are experiencing financial and emotional stress as a result. There are several signs or symptoms when a farm family is in need of help. These are signs that can be observed by friends, extended family members, neighbors, milk haulers, veterinarians, clergy persons, school personnel or health and human service workers. These signs include:

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| * **Change in routines**. The rancher or ranch family stops attending church, drops out of 4-H, Home makers or other groups, or no longer stops in at the local coffee shop or feed mill. | * **Care of livestock declines.** Cattle may not be cared for in the usual way; they may lose condition, appear gaunt or show signs of neglect or physical abuse. |
| * **Increase in illness**. Farmers or farm family members may experience more upper respiratory illnesses (colds, flu) or other chronic conditions (aches, pains, persistent cough). | * **Increase in farm or ranch accidents.** The risk of farm accidents increases due to fatigue or loss of ability to concentrate; children may be at risk if there isn’t adequate childcare. |
| * **Appearance of farmstead declines**. The farm family no longer takes pride in the way farm buildings and grounds appear, or no longer has the time to do maintenance work. | * **Children show signs of stress.** Farm and ranch children may act out, decline in academic performance or be increasingly absent from school; they may also show signs of physical abuse or neglect. |

## signs of chronic, prolonged stress

When farm and ranch families are stressed out for long periods of time – chronic, prolonged stress – they may experience a number of signs and symptoms. Watch for the following effects in farm families you see on a day-to-day basis:

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| --- | --- | --- |
| Physical | **Emotional** | Behavioral |
| Headaches | Sadness | Irritability |
| Ulcers | Depression | Backbiting |
| Backaches | Bitterness | Acting Out |
| Eating Irregularities | Anger | Withdrawal |
| Sleep Disturbances | Anxiety | Passive-Aggressiveness |
| Frequent Sickness | Loss of Spirit | Alcoholism |
| Exhaustion | Loss of Humor | Violence |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Cognitive | Self-Esteem |
| Memory Loss | “I’m a failure.” |
| Lack of Concentration | “I blew it.” |
| Inability to Make Decisions | “Why can’t I…?” |

## signs of depression or suicidal intent

The greater the number of signs or symptoms a ranch or farm family is experiencing, the greater your concern should be. In addition, if family members are exhibiting the following signs of depression or suicidal intent, it is important that you connect them with professional help as soon as possible. All cries for help should be taken seriously.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Signs of Depression** | **Signs of Suicidal Intent** |
| **Appearance:** Sad face, slow movements, unkempt look. | **Anxiety or depression**: Severe, intense feelings of anxiety or depression. |
| **Unhappy feelings:** Feeling sad, hopeless, discouraged, and listless. | **Withdrawal or isolation:** Withdrawn, alone, lack of friends and supports. |
| **Negative thoughts:** “I’m a failure;” “I’m no good,” “No one cares.” | **Helpless and hopeless:** Sense of complete powerlessness, a hopeless feeling. |
| **Reduced activity and pleasure in usual activities:** “Doing anything is just too much of an effort.” | **Alcohol abuse:** There is often a link between alcoholism and suicide. |
| **People problems:** “I don’t want anyone to see me,” “I feel so lonely.” | **Previous suicidal attempts:** May have been previous attempts of low to high lethality. |
| **Physical problems:** Sleeping problems, decreased sexual interest, headaches. | **Suicidal plan:** Frequent or constant thoughts with a specific plan in mind. |
| **Guilt and low self esteem:** “It’s all my fault,” “I should be punished.” | **Cries for help:** Making a will, giving possessions away, making statements such as “I’m calling it quits,” or “Maybe my family would be better off without me.” |

# how to refer a person for help

1. Be aware of the agencies and resources available in c) State what you think the person’s or family’s needs

your community – what services they offer and what are (needs immediate protection from suicidal acts,

their limitations are. needs an appointment for counseling, needs financial

1. Listen for signs and symptoms that the person or or legal advice).

family needs help which you can’t provide, i.e., financial, d) Provide the agency with background information

legal or personal counseling. (name, address and phone; age and gender; nature of

1. Assess what agency or community resource would current problem or crisis; any past history you’re

be most appropriate to address the person’s (or family’s) aware of; further information as called for).

problems. e) Ask the agency what follow-up action they will

1. Discuss the referral with the person or family (“It take:

sounds/looks like you are feeling \_\_\_\_\_. I think \_\_\_\_\_ \*When will they act on the referral?

could help you deal with your situation.”) \*Who will be the person for you to contact later if

1. Explore the individual’s or family’s willingness to necessary?

initiate contact with the community resource (“How do \*What will be the cost of the service (flat fee/sliding

you feel about seeking help from this person/agency?”). scale)?

1. Where the person or family is unwilling to take the \*Do you need to do anything else to complete the

initiative or where there is some danger if action is not referral?

taken, you should take the initiative: 7. Make sure the person or family and the referral agency

* 1. Call the agency and ask to speak to the intake connect and get together. Make one or more follow-up

worker (if there is one). contacts with the agency if called for by the situation.

* 1. Identify yourself and your relationship with

the person or family.

# WHERE DO I FIND HELP?

Call 1-800-SUICIDE or 1-800-784-2433 24 x 7 for a live, trained person to talk with and to find local resources.

Visit [**http:/therapistlocator.net/**](http://therapistlocator.net/)**.**

[**https://www.psychologytoday.com**](https://www.psychologytoday.com)

[**http://www.networktherapy.com/directory/find\_therapist.asp**](http://www.networktherapy.com/directory/find_therapist.asp)

[**http://therapists.americanmentalhealth.com/therapistlocator.pagel**](http://therapists.americanmentalhealth.com/therapistlocator.pagel)

1. ChecklistWilliamsFetsch (Rev. 12.0618) [↑](#footnote-ref-1)