

# Gatekeeper Network

## Guide for Gatekeeper managers

Support for the deployment and maintenance of a network of Gatekeepers



Centre de prévention  
du suicide de Montréal



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# Introduction

Would you like to maintain your network of Gatekeepers within your community, or are you wondering whether it would be appropriate to set one up? This guide is for you!

More than 1,000 people take their own lives each year in Quebec. These are people who, in their personal or professional lives, may be experiencing vulnerability, difficult life events, psychosocial risks, or suffering. Some of them may not be aware of local resources or may be afraid to ask for help. So how can the workplace facilitate access to resources? By implementing a network of Gatekeepers, you enable trained employees to offer local suicide prevention services, thus bridging the gap between your workplace and the appropriate resources.

By developing such a network, your workplace emphasizes a culture of care and kindness, focused on the well-being and safety of its community members.

This guide provides you with guidelines to help you in your efforts to both deploy and maintain your network.

## Welcome to the suicide prevention family!

### Acronyms

AQPS : Association Québécoise de Prévention du Suicide  
CPSM : Centre de Prévention du Suicide de Montréal  
GEDPAS : Grille d'Estimation de la Dangerosité du Passage à l'Acte Suicidaire  
MSSS : Ministère de la Santé et des Services Sociaux

### Sigles



Tools



Key point: "How can the CPSM support us?"

## **Gatekeeper Network : community-based prevention**

This first section is a reminder of some essential basic knowledge about Gatekeeper networks.

### **Role of Gatekeepers: “Identify, verify, encourage”**

Gatekeepers are tasked with identifying people who may be in distress, verifying the presence of suicidal thoughts, encouraging them to seek help, and, if necessary, referring them to a designated professional or resource. Being a Sentinel means being proactive!

Please note: Gatekeepers do not have an intervention role per se! The Gatekeepers role is not to assess the risk of suicide or to follow up with the person who is thinking about suicide. They must refer the person to the appropriate professionals (see Tool 1 - Process).

**Identify:** Gatekeepers are trained to identify signs of distress, such as critical moments in a person's life. They can therefore use their knowledge to approach the person in distress, express their concerns, and acknowledge their experience.

**Verify:** this step involves checking for suicidal thoughts by asking simple, clear questions. Optionally, Gatekeepers may also be asked to check for plans for a possible suicide;

- **Encourage:** after welcoming the person and gathering the necessary information, the Gatekeeper will encourage them to seek help and put them in touch with their designated support worker or resource, so that the person in distress receives appropriate support. During the training, the Gatekeepers will learn to identify situations that require emergency assistance and to find support if the person in distress refuses help.

### **Becoming a Gatekeeper: volunteering above all else!**

Gatekeepers are adults who volunteer because they have a certain sensitivity to helping others or a certain leadership ability, and have received specific training from an accredited organization.



For greater clarity, the MSSS defines the role of a Gatekeeper as follows:

*"People who act as gatekeepers are adults who are likely to come into contact with individuals considering suicide through their work (e.g., teachers), volunteer activities (in a social club, among others), their position in their community (such as youth leaders), or their listening skills. They are individuals chosen for their close ties to at-risk groups or communities, who volunteer their time."*

(translated from MSSS (2006), L'implantation de réseaux de sentinelles en prévention du suicide. Cadre de référence, [s. l.], p. 29.)

What is the difference from a "Réseau Veilleurs"? : a "veilleur.se" will also listen to colleagues in distress and offer support while directing the person to an appropriate resource. However, their role does not include addressing the issue of suicide directly, which requires specific training.

**Why is it important to respect the profile of Gatekeepers?**

**Because taking on this role means having a new responsibility and tackling a subject that can sometimes be difficult!**

**That's why:**

**volunteers must be comfortable and capable of taking on this new role;**

**it is necessary to offer them appropriate follow-up and support;**

**a Gatekeeper can withdraw from the network at any time, or even decide not to complete the training.**

**The designated responder or resource: support at all times**

**This term refers to any professional trained in the Suicide Risk Assessment Scale (GEDPAS), who can assess the level of risk, work to instill hope in the person contemplating suicide, but also put safety measures in place with them and provide follow-up.**

Their role is to equip the Gatekeeper, support them, and contact the person contemplating suicide, if necessary, to carry out a suicide prevention intervention (see Tool 1 - Process).



This resource may be internal (e.g., psychosocial service providers trained in GEDPAS) and/or external (e.g., CPSM available outside of these providers' working hours, or defined exclusively as a designated resource).

If you have this person internally, it is essential to communicate with them about the existence of the Gatekeepers network and their possible involvement in it.

### **Gatekeepers Network: “Making help accessible”**

**Creating a network means initiating a wave of solidarity.**

**The various networks help to weave a real safety net: by training Gatekeepers in companies, community organizations, and a wide variety of settings, we are increasing the number of allies in suicide prevention.**

**The main advantages of a network:**

- **Reaching out to isolated and vulnerable people;**
- **Demystifying the request for help, raising awareness of resources and facilitating access to them;**
- **Adopting appropriate language to break the taboo surrounding mental health and suicide prevention.**

### **Setting up a network of Gatekeepers**

**Setting up and deploying such a network requires a certain level of commitment!**

The network manager must consider the teams or bodies in which it would be relevant to have Gatekeepers; be clear about the role and commitments expected, particularly when advertising the training offer. He or she must ensure the well-being of his or her Gatekeepers and the maintenance of the network. All these topics are covered in the following two sections.



**“Is this the most suitable training for our needs?”**

**The CPSM offers different training courses depending on the needs of your environment. We can work with you to determine the most suitable training, and possibly offer a customized course, to ensure consistency between your teams' missions and their potential role in suicide prevention.**

## Preparation steps

In this section, we offer some points for consideration that will be useful prior to deploying a network.

The following points will be included in Tool 2 - "Checklist."

### **Ensure you have leadership support**

Deploying a network is not your responsibility alone! This commitment must be validated and supported by your superiors. It is a team effort, and you will need the approval and support of your managers throughout the process.

### **Consider internal needs**

**Before deploying a Gatekeepers network, you need to know who it is intended for: which colleagues will the Gatekeepers be monitoring?**

Your organization may be made up of different teams with different realities. It is therefore important to consider the needs of the entire workplace. Keep in mind that the number of Gatekeepers may vary depending on the number of employees in your workplace. You can't rely on just one person!

### **Identify a network manager**

**This step may already have been completed, or you may still have some questions!**

To find the ideal manager, you need to think about the different skills and qualities required for this role: liaison with teams, management and organizational skills, listening skills, etc. Keep in mind that it's not just about offering training, but also about providing ongoing support to the Gatekeepers, updating the network, and providing training. In some environments, the designated speaker takes on this role—but this is not always the case!

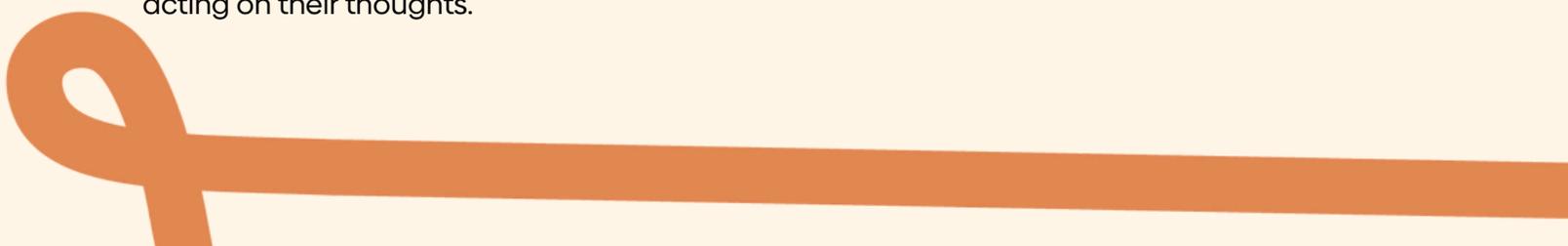
### **Define a potential list of participants or identify a profile**

**We remind you that registration must be voluntary!**

This does not prevent your community from targeting certain teams or individuals who could be relevant for this role. Using the Gatekeeper description as a guide, you can identify the desired profile and contact the people you would like to recruit.

### **Identify a designated responder**

As explained above, the designated responder is a real point of reference for the Gatekeepers. He or she will support them in their role and assess the risk of the person contemplating suicide acting on their thoughts.



Here are some points to consider when appointing a specific representative:

Does this person have the required training?

Is it appropriate for this person to receive requests from colleagues with suicidal ideation?

What would be their limitations, what would be their scope of intervention?

How can we ensure that they feel comfortable in this role with Gatekeepers?

- Outside of their working hours, who is our designated resource?



### “What if no one on my team can fill this role?”

**Don't panic! If no one on your team can serve as the designated responder, the Gatekeepers in your network can always refer to the CMHS, 24/7. We will then become your designated resource.**

We can also be the go-to resource outside of your designated responder's hours.

## Identify a training organization

The Gatekeepers training program was developed by the AQPS at the request of the MSSS. This means that it is necessary to find an accredited resource to deliver the training. Please note that the training takes place over a full day (7 hours).

## Set one (or more) dates

Deploying a network of Gatekeepers means setting aside time for volunteers to be trained. To promote concentration and well-being among participants, we recommend adjusting the work schedules of those who would be working immediately before or after the training, where possible (e.g., people working evening or night shifts).

## Promote

It is essential to provide a clear presentation of the Gatekeepers role so that volunteers can make an informed decision about signing up. When promoting the program, be sure to specify that it is a suicide prevention training program and that it involves volunteering! Also mention that future Gatekeepers will receive support in their role. The CPSM can assist you with your communication strategy.

## Maintenance steps

It is not enough to simply deploy a network; it must be maintained and kept alive! Here you will find advice on the right conditions for maintaining the Gatekeepers network.

The following points will be included in Tool 2 - "Checklist."

### Ensure a return

Here, the important thing is to confirm the list of volunteers who have been trained and are committed to their new role, but also to assess the support they will need going forward. This feedback session is also an opportunity to reiterate the support they can receive, both internally and externally (network manager, designated resource or representative, other Gatekeepers).

If you haven't already done so, take this opportunity to put your Gatekeepers in touch with their designated support person, think collectively about how to communicate their presence within your community, and raise awareness about the network.

### Communicating about the network

Communication is important—but you need to know how your Gatekeepers want to be identified!

In some workplaces, Gatekeepers have a sticker on their office door. In others, membership in the network is included in their email signature. Sometimes, there is no individual identification of Gatekeepers or transmission of contact lists, but simply a general communication about the deployment of a network within the workplace. It is up to you to collectively find the best way to communicate the existence of the Gatekeepers network!

The important thing is that your community understands your workplace's commitment to the safety of its employees and has easy access to the help offered.

### Provide a welcoming space

We cannot stress this enough: the role of a Gatekeepers is not always easy. We urge them never to deal with a worrying situation alone, but also to make use of the various support services available to them. As a network manager, you will need to think about how you want to support your Gatekeepers, with kindness and without judgment, while respecting confidentiality.



The role of Gatekeepers can cause fatigue, or even compassion fatigue, for your colleagues concerned. When we volunteer to play such a role, but we are not trained to be counselors, it can be difficult to listen to certain comments and regulate our own emotions.

Lack of concentration, absenteeism, changes in habits or behavior... Without becoming overly vigilant, we encourage you to address any worrying signs from your Gatekeepers.

 **I feel overwhelmed and don't know how to support a Gatekeepers who is dealing with personal issues... What should I do?"**

It's normal to feel overwhelmed when a colleague confides in you. The CPSM is available 24/7 to guide you and, if necessary, find the right resources for you.

### **Bringing the network to life**

**The Gatekeepers are part of a network, and therefore a collective! So how can you bring this network to life and prevent your Gatekeepers from becoming isolated?**

Here are a few ideas to help you:

**Are the Gatekeepers recognized by the community?**

**Do they recognize each other, and do they know how to contact each other?**

**Are they in contact with their designated representative?**

**What opportunities for discussion and support are available to them?**

**What continuing education is offered to them?**

**How can continuity be ensured if several Gatekeepers leave the network?**

**These ideas will help you nurture the network and ensure a certain degree of continuity after the training.**

### **Keep the list up to date**

As explained above, Gatekeepers are volunteers. They are under no obligation to fulfill this role and are not committed for a fixed period of time. They can decide to leave the network at any time. We encourage Gatekeepers who are going through difficult times or events in their lives to take care of themselves first and foremost. Similarly, a Gatekeepers who has taken a few weeks' break from their role can ask to be reinstated to the list.

The network manager must therefore keep their list up to date, for several reasons:

To ensure that Gatekeepers who wish to take a break are able to do so;

To ensure that Gatekeepers who wish to rejoin the network are able to do so (depending on the context, the length of the break, etc.);

- To reassess the needs of the community and the network if there are too few active Sentinels remaining.

### **Ensure ongoing training**

**Gatekeepers receive seven hours of training, but what happens after that? Sometimes months can go by without a Gatekeepers applying their new skills. Trained employees may lose their confidence over time or feel the need to develop new tools.**

**Based on the needs of your network, you can determine which topics to cover and in what format: workshop, coffee meeting, refresher session, advanced training, etc. You and your Gatekeepers can also draw on the advice shared in our newsletters and your Gatekeepers environment, or use them as inspiration**

(see Tool 3 - Online Support).



## The strength of a network of Gatekeepers

Since the network was established in the early 2000s, countless people in a multitude of ecosystems across Quebec have been offered help by their peers. Not all of these people, who seemed to be going through difficult times in their lives, had suicidal thoughts. However, they were able to benefit from the support of several resources thanks to the Sentinels, who were able to facilitate access to help.

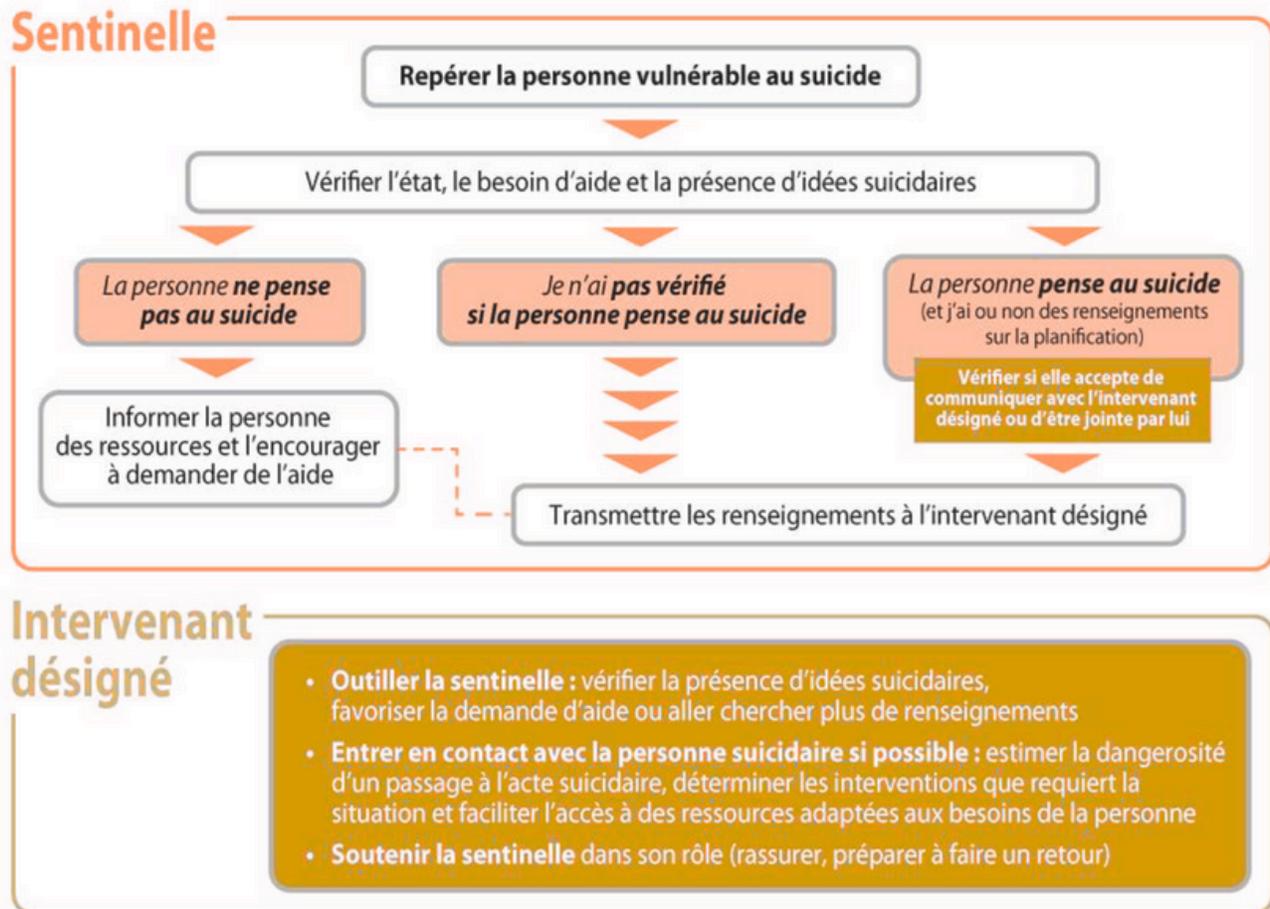
All these bridges created by the proactivity of the Gatekeepers contribute to individual well-being and, of course, to the collective well-being of their environment.

With this guide, you now have all the keys you need to deploy this wonderful network or maintain your own!

**The CPSM remains available to accompany and support you, so don't hesitate to contact us so we can take a moment together!**



## PROCESSUS



This process represents the entire role expected of a Gatekeepers and serves as a guideline for Gatekeepers training.

The training provides tools for identifying, welcoming, and verifying suicidal thoughts, and connecting the person to the designated responder or resource.

Through various group, subgroup, and pair activities, future Gatekeepers test their skills and comfort level in responding to the distress of someone who may be contemplating suicide.

If you have any questions about Gatekeepers training, please don't hesitate to contact our training department directly!



# CHECKLIST

## Preparation

**Ensure you have support from management** Do I have the agreement and human, material, and financial support of the leadership?

**Consider internal needs** Après de qui les Gatekeepers font-elles du repérage ? De combien de Gatekeepers avous-nous besoin ?

**Identify a network manager** Qui serait la personne la plus adaptée qui assurera la mise en place, le déploiement, le maintien et le soutien du réseau ?

**Define a potential list of participants.** Who could be asked to participate, and in which team(s)?

**Identify a designated representative** Who should be contacted internally or externally, depending on the time of day?

**Identify a training resource** What accredited resources can be mobilized?

**Scheduling a date** When can I release volunteers for training while still respecting their well-being?

**Distribute** Am I being clear enough in my presentation of the training program: volunteering, role, and expected commitments?

## Maintenance

**Ensure a return** How did the training go? What questions or concerns remain?

**Communicating the existence of the network** How can I raise awareness about Sentinelles in my community?

**Provide a safe space** How can we promote a sense of security and offer Sentinels a caring, judgment-free space?

**Bringing the network to life** LIIs the link between the Sentinels promoted? Is the continuity of the network ensured?

**Keep the list up to date** What system can I put in place to ensure additions and removals from the list? Do I have an adequate number of Gatekeepers in my network?

**Ensure continuing education** What are the needs of my Gatekeepers? What are the appropriate supports?





## Online support

Gatekeepers, like network managers, can subscribe to our newsletter and access their online environment!

### Newsletter

Sent approximately every three months, the newsletter supports Gatekeepers and network managers in their work. Through reminders, tools, and advice, it addresses various points covered in training. While respecting the limits of the Gatekeepers role, we also offer documentation for those interested in mental health or suicide prevention issues.

### Gatekeepers Environment

By creating your online account on the Gatekeepers Environment, you will have access to various tools: audio clips, data, documentation, reminders. This space is designed to fuel your thoughts on the role of a network or a Sentinel.

Sign up for the newsletter!

Sign up for the Gatekeeper Environment!



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1-866-277-3553

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**Clavardage : suicide.ca**

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