Purpose  The C-SSRS was designed to provide a prospective, standardized measure of suicidality. The scale allows clinicians and researchers alike to assess the severity and lethality of suicidal behaviors and ideations, and can be used to monitor treatment outcomes and establish suicide risk in a variety of research and clinical settings.

Population for Testing  The scale has been used in a number of different populations, both adult and pediatric.

Administration  Requiring approximately 5 min for completion, the C-SSRS is administered in the form of a clinical interview (though a self-report version is also available). Interviewers are not required to possess mental health training, allowing the scale to be used in any number of health care settings [1].

Reliability and Validity  Though the scale itself has not been validated, it was created to be the prospective counterpart to the classification system called the Columbia Classification Algorithm for Suicide Assessment (C-CASA; [2]). The C-CASA was developed as a retrospective method for evaluating adverse events in clinical trials and was found to possess an overall reliability of .89.

Obtaining a Copy  The scale is free for use in clinical settings. To obtain a copy, contact:
Kelly Posner
Center for Suicide Risk Assessment
Columbia University Department of Psychiatry
1051 Riverside Drive, Unit 74, New York, NY 10032, USA
Email: posnerk@childpsych.columbia.edu

Scoring  In terms of suicidal behaviors, the scale is divided into several categories [3]: actual attempts, interrupted attempts, aborted attempts, and preparatory acts or behaviors. Interviewers establish the presence or absence of these behaviors and, where applicable, the number of attempts, both over the course of a lifetime and in the period of interest (the last week or month). Similarly, five aspects of suicidal ideation are queried: the wish to be dead, nonspecific active suicidal thoughts, active ideation without intent to act, active ideation with some intent to act, and active ideation with specific plan or intent. The presence and frequency of these different thoughts are evaluated.
COLUMBIA-SUICIDE SEVERITY RATING SCALE

(C-SSRS)

Since Last Visit

Version 1/14/09


Disclaimer:

This scale is intended for use by trained clinicians. The questions contained in the Columbia-Suicide Severity Rating Scale are suggested probes. Ultimately, the determination of the presence of suicidality depends on clinical judgment.

Definitions of behavioral suicidal events in this scale are based on those used in The Columbia Suicide History Form, developed by John Mann, MD and Maria Oquendo, MD, Conte Center for the Neuroscience of Mental Disorders (CCNMD), New York State Psychiatric Institute, 1051 Riverside Drive, New York, NY, 10032. (Oquendo M. A., Halberstam B. & Mann J. J., Risk factors for suicidal behavior: utility and limitations of research instruments. In M.B. First [Ed.] Standardized Evaluation in Clinical Practice, pp. 103 -130, 2003.)

For reprints of the C-SSRS contact Kelly Posner, Ph.D., New York State Psychiatric Institute, 1051 Riverside Drive, New York, New York, 10032; inquiries and training requirements contact posnerk@childpsych.columbia.edu

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## SUICIDAL IDEATION

Ask questions 1 and 2. If both are negative, proceed to “Suicidal Behavior” section. If the answer to question 2 is “yes,” ask questions 3, 4, and 5. If the answer to question 1 and/or 2 is “yes,” complete “Intensity of Ideation” section below.

### Since Last Visit

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### 1. Wish to be Dead

Subject endorses thoughts about a wish to be dead or not alive anymore, or wish to fall asleep and not wake up.

*Have you wished you were dead or wished you could go to sleep and not wake up?*

If yes, describe:

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### 2. Non-Specific Active Suicidal Thoughts

General, non-specific thoughts of wanting to end one’s life/commit suicide (e.g. “I thought about killing myself”) without thoughts of ways to kill oneself/associated methods, intent, or plan during the assessment period.

*Have you actually had any thoughts of killing yourself?*

If yes, describe:

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### 3. Active Suicidal Ideation with Any Methods (Not Plan) without Intent to Act

Subject endorses thoughts of suicide and has thought of at least one method during the assessment period. This is different than a specific plan with time, place, or method details worked out (e.g., thought of method to kill self but not a specific plan). Includes person who would say, “I thought about taking an overdose but I never made a specific plan up to when, where or how I would actually do it...and I would never go through with it”.

*Have you been thinking about how you might do this?*

If yes, describe:

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### 4. Active Suicidal Ideation with Some Intent to Act, without Specific Plan

Active suicidal thoughts of killing oneself and subject reports having some intent to act on such thoughts, as opposed to “I have the thoughts but I definitely will not do anything about them”.

*Have you had these thoughts and had some intention of acting on them?*

If yes, describe:

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### 5. Active Suicidal Ideation with Specific Plan and Intent

Thoughts of killing oneself with details of plan fully or partially worked out and subject has some intent to carry it out.

*Have you started to work out or worked out the details of how to kill yourself? Do you intend to carry out this plan?*

If yes, describe:

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## INTENSITY OF IDEATION

The following features should be rated with respect to the most severe type of ideation (i.e., 1-5 from above, with 1 being the least severe and 3 being the most severe).

### Most Severe Ideation:

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<th>Type</th>
<th>(1-5)</th>
<th>Description of Ideation</th>
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### Frequency

*How many times have you had these thoughts?*

- (1) Less than once a week
- (2) Once a week
- (3) 2-5 times in week
- (4) Daily or almost daily
- (5) Many times each day

### Duration

*When you have the thoughts, how long do they last?*

- (1) fleeting - few seconds or minutes
- (2) Less than 1 hour/some of the time
- (3) 1-4 hours/lot of time
- (4) 4-8 hours/most of day
- (5) More than 8 hours/persistent or continuous

### Controlability

*Could you stop thinking about killing yourself or wanting to die if you wanted to?*

- (1) Easily able to control thoughts
- (2) Can control thoughts with little difficulty
- (3) Can control thoughts with some difficulty
- (4) Can control thoughts with a lot of difficulty
- (5) Unable to control thoughts
- (6) Does not attempt to control thoughts

### Deterrents

*Are there things - anyone or anything (e.g., family, religion, pain of death) - that stopped you from wanting to die or acting on thoughts of committing suicide?*

- (1) Deterrents definitely stopped you from attempting suicide
- (2) Deterrents probably stopped you
- (3) Uncertain that deterrents stopped you
- (4) Deterrents most likely did not stop you
- (5) Deterrents definitely did not stop you
- (6) Does not apply

### Reasons for Ideation

*What sort of reasons did you have for thinking about wanting to die or killing yourself? Was it to end the pain or stop the way you were feeling (in other words you couldn’t go on living with this pain or how you were feeling) or was it to get attention, revenge or a reaction from others? Or both?*

- (1) Completely to get attention, revenge or a reaction from others.
- (2) Mostly to get attention, revenge or a reaction from others.
- (3) Equally to get attention, revenge or a reaction from others and to end or stop the pain.
- (4) Mostly to end or stop the pain (you couldn’t go on living with the pain or how you were feeling).
- (5) Completely to end or stop the pain (you couldn’t go on living with the pain or how you were feeling).
- (6) Does not apply
### SUICIDAL BEHAVIOR

**Columbia-Suicide Severity Rating Scale (C-SSRS)**

**Actual Attempt:**
A potentially self-injurious act committed with at least some wish to die, as a result of act. Behavior was in part thought of as method to kill oneself. Intent does not have to be 100%. If there is any intent/desire to die associated with the act, then it can be considered an actual suicide attempt. **There does not have to be any injury or harm,** just the potential for injury or harm. If person pulls trigger while gun is in mouth but gun is broken so no injury results, this is considered an attempt.

Inferring Intent: Even if an individual denies intent/wish to die, it may be inferred clinically from the behavior or circumstances. For example, a highly lethal act that is clearly not an accident so no other intent but suicide can be inferred (e.g., gunshot to head, jumping from window of a high floor/office). Also, if someone denies intent to die, but they thought that what they did could be lethal, intent may be inferred.

**Have you made a suicide attempt?**

**Have you done anything to harm yourself?**

**Have you done anything dangerous where you could have died?**

- **What did you do?**
  - Did you ______ as a way to end your life?
  - Did you want to die (even a little) when you ______?
  - Were you trying to end your life when you ______?

- **Or did you think it was possible you could have died from ______?**

- **Or did you do it purely for other reasons / without ANY intention of killing yourself (like to relieve stress, feel better, get sympathy, or get something else to happen)?** (Self-injurious behavior without suicidal intent)

If yes, describe:

**Has subject engaged in Non-Suicidal Self-Injurious Behavior?**

**Interrupted Attempt:**
When the person is interrupted (by an outside circumstance) from starting the potentially self-injurious act (if not for that, actual attempt would have occurred).

Overdose: Person has pills in hand but is stopped from ingesting. Once they ingest any pills, this becomes an attempt rather than an interrupted attempt.

Shooting: Person has gun pointed toward self, gun is taken away by someone else, or is somehow prevented from pulling trigger. Once they pull the trigger, even if the gun fails to fire, it is an attempt. Jumping: Person is posted to jump, is grabbed and taken down from ledge. Hanging: Person has noose around neck but has not yet started to hang - is stopped from doing so.

**Has there been a time when you started to do something to end your life but someone or something stopped you before you actually did anything?**

If yes, describe:

**Aborted Attempt:**
When person begins to take steps to make a suicide attempt, but stops themselves before they actually have engaged in any self-destructive behavior. Examples are similar to interrupted attempts, except that the individual stops himself/herself, instead of being stopped by something else.

**Has there been a time when you started to do something to try to end your life but you stopped yourself before you actually did anything?**

If yes, describe:

**Preparatory Acts or Behavior:**
Acts or preparation towards immediately making a suicide attempt. This can include anything beyond a verbalization or thought, such as assembling a specific method (e.g., buying pills, purchasing a gun) or preparing for one’s death by suicide (e.g., giving things away, writing a suicide note).

**Have you taken any steps towards making a suicide attempt or preparing to kill yourself (such as collecting pills, getting a gun, giving valuables away or writing a suicide note)?**

If yes, describe:

**Suicidal Behavior:**

Suicidal behavior was present during the assessment period?

**Completed Suicide:**

Yes No

---

### Answer for Actual Attempts Only

**Actual Lethality/Medical Damage:**

1. No physical damage or very minor physical damage (e.g., surface scratches).
2. Minor physical damage (e.g. laceration, contusion, minor bleeding, sprain).
3. Moderate physical damage; medical attention needed (e.g., conscious but sleepy, somewhat responsive; second-degree burns; bleeding of major vessel).
4. Severe physical damage; medical hospitalization with intensive care required (e.g., coma without reflexes; third-degree burns less than 20% of body; extensive blood loss but can recover; major fractures).
5. Death

**Potential Lethality: Only Answer if Actual Lethality =**

0 = Behavior not likely to result in injury
1 = Behavior likely to result in injury but not likely to cause death
2 = Behavior likely to result in death despite available medical care

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References


Representative Studies Using Scale