

## **WARNING SIGNS OF RISK**

Recent tragedies in the news have caught our attention and have highlighted a connection to mental illness. It is important to keep in mind that not all people who have a mental illness are dangerous, nor are all tragic incidents caused because of mental illness. We ask, "How did this happen and why didn't anyone see it coming? Generally, there are signs of risk, although they may be subtle. If combined, the following can be warning signs:

### **WARNING SIGNS OF RISK**

#### **Psycho-Social Stressors**

- death of someone close
- loss of job
- illness
- divorce
- financial instability (debt)

#### **Obsessions**

- *radical* points of view--political, religious, etc.
- being fixated on an individual, a perceived injustice, etc.

#### **Medication**

- stopping medications prescribed for depression or mental illness
- potential medication reaction to new prescriptions or a combination medications
- use of street drugs and/or alcohol with prescribed medications

#### **Alcohol/ Drug Abuse**

**Erratic/ Bazaar Behavior** (strange behavior unlike individual)

#### **Weapons**

- access to weapons
- recent purchase of weapons

#### **Talk of Violent Behavior or Suicide**

#### **What You Can Do to address a Perceived Risk:**

- Get a second opinion from someone who also knows the individual

- Contact your local community mental health agency to ask questions; family physician
- Encourage/facilitate professional mental health treatment if warranted
- Call the police if there are indications of a plan, threats, and/or immediate danger.

(Refer to resources for information, i.e. [www.networkofcare.com](http://www.networkofcare.com) –library section)