

Prevention of Suicide in the U.S.

In 2011, suicide accounted for more than 38,000 deaths in the United States, and it was the 10th leading cause of death in the U.S.^{1,2} The loss of someone to suicide resonates among family, friends, coworkers, and others in the community. Family and friends may experience a range of painful emotions, such as shock, anger, guilt, and depression.³ Suicide can occur across demographics, but certain groups are more at risk than the general population. Risk factors for suicide include mental illness, substance abuse, family history of suicide, and previous suicide attempts, among other factors.⁴ Additional risk factors for some people may include a highly stressful life event or prolonged stress from problems like unemployment, serious relationship conflict, or bullying.⁵

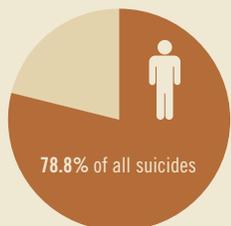
Suicide is devastating, but there are resources and information available to help prevent it. **Learn more to be the one who makes a difference.**



In 2010, suicide claimed the life of someone in the United States every 14 minutes.⁶

9 million

In 2012, an estimated 9 million adults aged 18 or older reported having serious thoughts of suicide.⁷



Women attempt suicide more often than men, yet, men die more often from suicide attempts. Men represent 78.8 percent of all suicides in the U.S.⁸

\$34.6
BILLION
per
YEAR

Suicide resulted in an estimated \$34.6 billion in combined medical and work loss costs in 2010.⁹

Who is at higher risk of suicide?

Teenagers and young adults

Suicide is the third leading cause of death for 15 to 24 year olds.¹⁰

Military Service Members

On average, a member of the Armed Forces dies by suicide every 25 hours.¹¹

Veterans

Suicide is the cause of death of an estimated 22 U.S. veterans each day.¹²

American Indians/Alaska Natives

Rates of suicide among American Indian/Alaska Natives ages 15 to 34 are more than double the national average for that age group.¹³

Gay, lesbian and bisexual youth

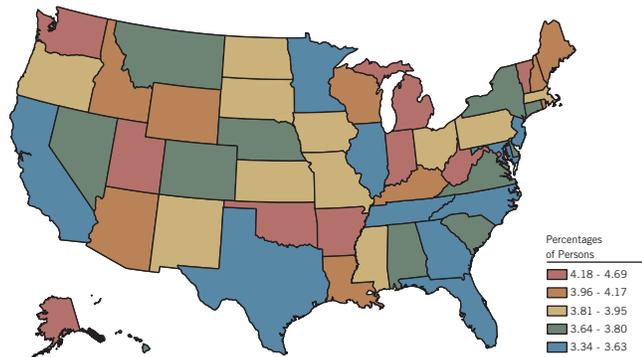
A study sponsored by the National Institutes of Health found that lesbian, gay and bisexual youth are approximately five times more likely to attempt suicide than heterosexual youth (21.5 vs. 4.2 percent).¹⁴

Latina girls

Latina girls between the ages of 12 and 17 have the highest rate of suicide attempts among all adolescent ethnic groups.¹⁵

Had Serious Thoughts of Suicide in the Past Year Among People Aged 18 or Older, by State:

Percentages, Annual Averages Based on 2011 and 2012 NSDUHs



Source: SAMHSA, Center for Behavioral Health Statistics and Quality, NSDUH, 2011 and 2012.
<http://www.samhsa.gov/data/NSDUH/2k12State/Maps/NSDUHsaeMaps2012.htm>

A National Perspective

Suicide prevention in every state and community is important — even the loss of one life is too many. Though suicide can occur in any community, some regions of the U.S. are more affected than others. No matter where you live, there are steps that can help prevent suicides and make a positive change in your state and community. See below to find out what you can do.

What Communities Can Do

Families, Friends, Educators, Coworkers and Other Community Members

Learn and recognize the warning signs of suicide, including:¹⁶

- Talking about: wanting to die or kill oneself, being a burden to others, feeling hopeless or having no reason to live, or feeling trapped or in unbearable pain.
- Looking for a way to kill oneself, such as searching online or buying a gun.
- Behaving recklessly.
- Withdrawing or feeling isolated, displaying extreme mood swings, or increasing the use of alcohol or drugs.
- Showing rage or talking about seeking revenge, acting anxious or agitated, or sleeping too little or too much.

You can help someone who is considering suicide by taking one or more of the following steps:¹⁷

- Be willing to listen, and don't lecture or debate whether suicide is right or wrong. Allow the person in need to express his or her feelings without passing judgment or acting shocked.
- Be direct and get involved. Talk openly and matter-of-factly, showing interest and support for the person at risk.

- Don't be sworn to secrecy — seek support and professional help for the person at risk.
- Offer hope that alternatives are available.
- Get help from people or agencies that specialize in crisis intervention and suicide prevention.
 - Seek confidential help, available 24 hours a day, through the **National Suicide Prevention** Lifeline: 1-800-273-TALK (8255), a toll-free service funded by SAMHSA.

Health Care Providers¹⁸

Implement the following effective strategies for suicide prevention:

- Learn, identify, and respond to suicide warning signs.
- Recognize and treat depression and substance use disorders through the creation of treatment plans and/or referral to a qualified behavioral health professional.

Community Coalitions and Organizations

- Meet with local officials and ask them to support suicide prevention in the community and statewide.¹⁹
- Facilitate trainings on different topics, such as intervention skills, for key stakeholders and community members.²⁰
- Provide informational materials to schools and parents and at local events.²¹

School Administrators

- Use SAMHSA's **Preventing Suicide: A Toolkit for High Schools**, available at <http://store.samhsa.gov/product/Preventing-Suicide-A-Toolkit-for-High-Schools/SMA12-4669>, for information on how to implement a suicide prevention program that responds to the needs and cultures of students.
- Help prevent suicide by establishing comprehensive crisis plans and school-based prevention and anti-bullying programs. See below for resources that can provide additional information. Learn more about national efforts in the **National Prevention Strategy**, available at <http://www.surgeongeneral.gov/initiatives/prevention/strategy/report.pdf> and the **2012 National Strategy for Suicide Prevention**, available at http://www.surgeongeneral.gov/library/reports/national-strategy-suicide-prevention/full_report-rev.pdf.

Parents and Caregivers

- Ask your child's friends and teachers if you have concerns about your child's behavior.
- Spend time each day listening and talking to your children. Ask about their concerns, and express what you've heard back to them to make sure you understand each other.
- If you have concerns, talk to your pediatrician or call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (1-800-273-TALK [8255]).

Workplace²²

- Inform employees about the warning signs, risk factors, and prevention approaches for suicide.
- Create a work environment in which co-workers care for and support each other.
- Promote the development of interpersonal and social competency through training in stress management and coping skills to help individuals deal with problems.
- Expand awareness of suicide-prevention programs and mental health and substance use disorder assessment and treatment.

Helpful Resources

- **SAMHSA's Store**, <http://store.samhsa.gov>, provides a downloadable wallet card that lists the warning signs for suicide. The wallet card is available in English and Spanish. SAMHSA's Store also offers other materials about suicide, suicide prevention, and coping and caring for loved ones.
- **The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline** website, <http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org>, houses information about suicide warning signs and what happens when someone calls the Lifeline; a separate website about suicide for young people (<http://www.youmatter.suicidepreventionlifeline.org>); and other coping and prevention resources.
- The **StopBullying.gov** website, <http://www.stopbullying.gov>, offers information from various government agencies on what bullying is, what cyberbullying is, who is at risk, and how you can prevent and respond to bullying.
- **SAMHSA's Behavioral Health Treatment Services Locator**, available at <http://findtreatment.samhsa.gov>, can help people find mental health services and resources in their communities.
- For broader policy issues, the **National Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention**, available at <http://www.actionallianceforsuicideprevention.org>, is a public-private collaboration launched in 2010 to promote implementation of the National Strategy for Suicide Prevention. SAMHSA is an active member of the partnership.
- **The Trevor Project**, available at <http://www.thetrevorproject.org>, promotes acceptance of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning (LGBTQ) young people ages 13 to 24 and helps to prevent suicide among those youth. **The Trevor Helpline**, which can be reached at 1-866-488-7386, is a 24-hour toll-free suicide helpline for LGBTQ youth.
- **The Suicide Prevention Resource Center**, available at <http://www.sprc.org>, provides access to the science and experience that can support efforts to develop programs, implement interventions, and promote policies to prevent suicide. Resources include information on school-based prevention programs, a best practices registry, state information and more.

Confidential help is available 24 hours a day through the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline, 1-800-273-TALK (8255), a toll-free service funded by SAMHSA. Chat services are also available through the Lifeline website (<http://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/GetHelp/LifelineChat.aspx>).

You can also call SAMHSA's National Helpline, 1-800-662-HELP (4357) or 1-800-487-4889 (TDD), for 24-hour free and confidential information and treatment referrals in English and Spanish.

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