SUICIDE
PREVENTION, INTERVENTION, & POSTVENTION

November 20, 2020
Mandy Abernethy
&
Robin Terry
AGENDA

➢ Legislative Mandates
➢ Suicide Myths & Facts
➢ Navigating Texas & Community Statistics
➢ Risk & Protective Factors
➢ Warning Signs
➢ Prevention: Helping Students at Risk of Suicide
➢ Best Practices in Intervention
➢ Postvention: What to do After a Suicide
➢ Resources
Legislative Mandates

• TX school districts must include suicide prevention in campus improvement plan

• All new employees required to receive suicide training annually; TEA will determine training prevention schedule for existing employees – TEA & HHSC has developed list of best practice programs https://tea.texas.gov/About_TEA/Other_Services/Mental_Health/Mental_Health_and_Behavioral_Health/

• TX Education Code emphasizes role of school counselor in suicide prevention
Suicide ranks as the 10th leading cause of death in the US.

It ranks as the 2nd leading cause of death for 15-34-year-olds.

Source: CDC Wonder Online Database
United Health Foundation
Edition Year 2019

https://www.americashealthrankings.org/explore/annual/measure/Suicide/state/TX
Gender

Most Current Statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SEX</th>
<th>TX: 5.9</th>
<th>U.S.: 6.3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Suicide - Female</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SEX</th>
<th>TX: 22.4</th>
<th>U.S.: 23.3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Suicide - Male</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Deaths per 100,000 population

Source: CDC Wonder Online Database
United Health Foundation
Edition Year 2019

https://www.americashealthrankings.org/explore/annual/measure/Suicide/state/TX
Most Current Statistics

Source: CDC Wonder Online Database
United Health Foundation
Edition Year 2019

https://www.americashealthrankings.org/explore/annual/measure/Suicide/state/TX
### Most Current Statistics

Source: CDC Wonder Online Database
United Health Foundation
Edition Year 2019

[https://www.americashealthrankings.org/explore/annual/measure/Suicide/state/TX](https://www.americashealthrankings.org/explore/annual/measure/Suicide/state/TX)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RACE/ETHNICITY</th>
<th>TX</th>
<th>U.S.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Suicide - Asian</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>7.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suicide - Black</td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>6.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suicide - Hispanic</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>7.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suicide - White</td>
<td>20.8</td>
<td>18.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Deaths per 100,000 population
Suicide Facts & Figures: Texas 2019

On average, one person dies by suicide every two hours in the state.

More than twice as many people died by suicide in Texas in 2017 than in alcohol related motor vehicle accidents.

The total deaths to suicide reflect a total of 84,679 years of potential life lost (YPLL) before age 65.

Suicide cost Texas a total of $3,516,245,000 combined lifetime medical and work loss cost in 2010, or an average of $1,216,273 per suicide death.

*Based on most recent 2017 data from CDC. Learn more at afsp.org/statistics.

Texas 2019

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Number of Deaths by Suicide</th>
<th>Rate per 100,000 Population</th>
<th>State Rank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Texas</td>
<td>3,778</td>
<td>13.34</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nationally</td>
<td>47,173</td>
<td>14.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

leading cause of death in Texas:

2nd leading cause of death for ages 15-34
4th leading cause of death for ages 35-44
5th leading cause of death for ages 45-54
9th leading cause of death for ages 55-64
17th leading cause of death for ages 65 & older
Risk and Protective Factors
Risk Factors

Personal or environmental characteristics associated with suicide… a greater potential for suicide behavior may exist with one or more these factors:

Behavioral Health Disorders/Issues
- Depressive disorders
- Substance abuse or dependence
- Conduct/disruptive behavior disorders
- Other disorders (e.g., anxiety, personality)
- Previous suicide attempts
- Self-injury (without intent to die)

Personal Traits
- Hopelessness
- Low self-esteem
- Loneliness
- Social isolation & lack of belonging
- Low stress tolerance
- Impulsivity
- Risk taking, recklessness
- Poor problem-solving or coping skills
- Poor Perception of self
- Capacity to self-injure
- Perception of being a burden
- Unwilling to seek help due to stigma
Risk Factors

Personal or environmental characteristics associated with suicide… a greater potential for suicide behavior may exist with one or more these factors:

- Relational difficulties or losses – e.g.: break up
- Disciplinary/Legal problems
- Bullying (victim or bully)
- Not attending school
- Physical, sexual, or psychological abuse
- Chronic illness/disability
- Exposure to suicide
- Parent Divorce
- Death of significant person

Adverse Life Circumstances

- Negative school culture
- Lack of acceptance of differences
- Expression and acts of hostility
- Lack of respect and fair treatment
- Lack of respect for the cultures of all students
- Poorly lit areas conducive to bullying and violence
- Limited access to mental health care
- Access to lethal means, particularly in the home

Environmental
Protective Factors

Characteristics & Behaviors

Family & Social Support

School

Mental Health Providers

Access to Means

Positive conditions, personal, and social resources that promote resiliency and reduce potential for suicide. Strengthening these factors also protect students from other risks; including, violence, substance abuse, and academic failure.
Protective Factors

Characteristics & Behavior
- Emotional well-being
- Emotional Intelligence
- Adaptable temperament
- Strong problem-solving skills
- Coping Skills
- Self-Esteem
- Frequent physical activity
- Spiritual faith or church
- Cultural Beliefs that affirm life
- Resilience
- Self-regulation
- Body image, care, & protection

Family & Social Support
- Connectedness to family
- Strong positive relationships
- Parental involvement
- A Caring friend and/or adult
- Family support of school
- Family disapproves of antisocial behaviors
Protective Factors

School

- Positive school experiences
- Part of a close school community
- Safe environment at school (especially for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender youth)
- Adequate or better academic achievement
- A sense of connectedness to the school
- A respect for the cultures of all students

Mental Health Providers

- Access to effective care for mental, physical, & substance abuse disorders
- Easy access to care & support through ongoing mental health relationships
Protective Factors

Access to Means

- Restricted access to firearms: guns locked or unloaded, ammunition stored or locked
- Safety barriers for bridges, buildings, and other jumping sites
- Restricted access to medications (over-the-counter and prescriptions)
- Restricted access to alcohol (due to increased risk of suicide by firearms if victim is drinking at the time)
WARNING SIGNS

Signs are often sent out before an attempt. They may be loud and clear, low-key, or subtle.

American Association of Suicidology defines Warning Signs as the “earliest detectable signs that indicate heightened risk for suicide in the near minutes, hours, or days.”
IS PATH WARM?

American Association of Suicidology uses this mnemonic to help remember key warning signs.

I  **Ideation** (threatening to hurt themselves, talking or writing about death)
S  **Substance Abuse** (increased substance use)

P  **Purposelessness** (perception of no reason for living, no sense of purpose)
A  **Anxiety** (agitation, unable to sleep or sleep extraordinary amounts of time)

T  **Trapped** (feeling like there’s no way out of their situation)
H  **Hopelessness** (no sense/perception the future will be better)

W  **Withdrawal** (from friends, family, work and society in general)
A  **Anger** (uncontrollable rage/anger, seeking revenge)
R  **Recklessness** (engaging in risky behavior, activities, seemingly without thought)

M  **Mood** Changes (dramatic, unpredictable mood changes)
Two Levels of Warning Signs

High Risk

Chronic & Ongoing Risk
High Risk Warning Signs

Take action by the observer by contacting a mental health professional and/or follow school Suicide Protocols.

Any activity in the following:

- Threatening to hurt or kill oneself
- Talking of wanting to hurt or kill oneself
- Looking for ways to kill oneself by seeking access to firearms, drugs (prescription or illicit) or other means
- Talking, writing or posting on social media about death, dying and suicide
Chronic & Ongoing Risk Warning Signs

Feelings & behavior experienced over an extended amount of time.

**TAKE ACTION** for these signs as well.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FEELINGS</th>
<th>BEHAVIOR</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No reason for living or sense of purpose</td>
<td>Increased Substance use</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feeling Trapped &amp; have no way out</td>
<td>Withdrawal from friends, family, or society (school functions)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hopelessness</td>
<td>Rage, anger, revenge-seeking behavior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dramatic mood changes</td>
<td>Reckless or risky decision making and actions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anxiety and/or Agitation</td>
<td>Unable to sleep or sleeping all the time</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Prevention

Suicide is the most preventable public health problem according to Psychology Today.

Steps to being proactive to ensure the safety of others.
“An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.”

1. Do not be fearful of inquiring about suicidal thoughts
2. Know the Warning Signs and Risk Factors
3. Demystify Suicide misconceptions
4. Understand what suicidal ideation sounds like
5. Recognize & understand the nature of impulsivity
6. Have crisis resources available and no protocols
7. Provide a School-based suicide prevention program
8. Educate Staff, Students, and Families
9. Instill a safe and supportive school climate
10. Connect them with 1 Caring Positive Responsible Adult
Suicide intervention is a direct effort to prevent a person or persons from attempting to take their own life or lives intentionally.

“Stepping in to help someone…”
5 Action Steps for Helping Someone in Emotional Pain

In 2018, suicide claimed the lives of more than 48,000 people in the United States, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Suicide affects people of all ages, genders, races, and ethnicities.

Suicide is complicated and tragic, but it can be preventable. Knowing the warning signs for suicide and how to get help can help save lives.

Here are 5 steps you can take to #BeThe1To help someone in emotional pain:

1. ASK:
   “Are you thinking about killing yourself?” It’s not an easy question but studies show that asking at-risk individuals if they are suicidal does not increase suicides or suicidal thoughts.

2. KEEP THEM SAFE:
   Reducing a suicidal person’s access to highly lethal items or places is an important part of suicide prevention. While this is not always easy, asking if the at-risk person has a plan and removing or disabling the lethal means can make a difference.

3. BE THERE:
   Listen carefully and learn what the individual is thinking and feeling. Research suggests acknowledging and talking about suicide may in fact reduce rather than increase suicidal thoughts.

4. HELP THEM CONNECT:
   Save the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline number (1-800-273-TALK) and the Crisis Text Line (741741) in your phone so they’re there if you need them. You can also help make a connection with a trusted individual like a family member, friend, spiritual advisor, or mental health professional.

5. STAY CONNECTED:
   Staying in touch after a crisis or after being discharged from care can make a difference. Studies have shown the number of suicide deaths goes down when someone follows up with the at-risk person.

For more information on suicide prevention:
www.nimh.nih.gov/suicideprevention
www.bethethe1to.com

NIH/NIH National Institute of Mental Health

NIH Identifier No. CM 20-4315
Revised 2020
When Talking to a suicidal person...

**DO:**
- Be Yourself
- Listen
- By sympathetic & nonjudgemental
- Offer HOPE
- Take the person seriously

**Do NOT:**
- Argue with him/her
- Act Shocked
- Promise confidentiality
- Offer ways to fix his/her problems
- Blame yourself
Helping to intervene...

- Get professional help and/or assistance
- Give them activities and/or resources
- Encourage positive changes
- Make a safety plan
- Identify access to any means & help remove potential means
- Continue your support (Check In)
Ideas for interventions...

- **Next five minutes (Distraction Activity)**
  - Listen to playlist
  - Monitor a pulse
  - Draw/Color/Doodle
  - Exercise (walk, yoga, stretch, move)
  - Grateful list or journal
  - Bucket list to instill HOPE
- **Call a Friend**
- **Relaxation/Deep Breathing**
- **Make a HELP CARD to have when in crisis**
- **Schedule “Check Ins” with caring adult**
- **Stress release bubbles or balls**
Postvention:

The American Association of Suicidology (1998) defines suicide postvention as “the provision of crisis intervention, support and assistance for those affected by a completed suicide”. “Affected” individuals include classmates, friends, teachers, and family members, and are often referred to as “survivors” of suicide (Knieper, 1999).

Terms to know:
- **Suicide cluster** – higher than average number of attempts or deaths in a certain population within a specified time period
- **Suicide contagion** – those attempts or deaths are connected by person, place or time
Goals of Postvention:

- Reduce further risk of suicidal behavior
- Avoid glorifying or sensationalizing the suicide
- Avoid vilifying the decedent
- Identify others that may be at a high risk for suicidal behavior
- Connect with mental health resources
- Identify factors that may be influencing process of contagion
Helping Students Cope

Key Considerations:

**Emotional Regulation** - ability to appropriately experience & express intense emotions; such as grief and fear.

Help youth **recognize complex feelings and physical indicators of distress** (for ex: stomachache, restlessness, headaches)

- **Ask:** What is your biggest concern about the immediate future?
- What would help you feel safer right now?

**Identify & acknowledge need to express feelings & strategies to manage:**

- Encourage actions to do when feel intense emotions
  - Relaxation & distraction skills
  - Engage in favorite activity
  - Exercise
- Think about how they coped in the past in a difficult time & they can use those skills
- Make a list of people who can turn to for support
- List what are they looking forward to
- Give self permission to feel better & take mind off situation
- Encourage thinking about how they want to remember friend
- Educate students about school guidelines

**Schedule meetings/check ins** with students in small groups to address emotional needs or youth at high risk.
Helping Students Cope

Anniversary of the Death and Significant dates

The anniversary of the death (and other significant dates, such as the deceased’s birthday) may bring up emotions that can be upsetting for some students and staff.

It is helpful to anticipate this and provide an opportunity to acknowledge the date, particularly with those students who were especially close to the student who died.

Make note and be prepared for these upcoming times.
Going Forward

School Considerations

Suicide Awareness Programs

Education staff, students, and families

School-based Suicide Prevention program

School Climate to Say something and report concerns

Provide access to resources, hotlines, and mental health professionals
Teen Suicide Prevention

PSA

By Mayo Clinic
National Association of School Psychologists

Child Mind Institute
https://childmind.org/article/teen-suicides-risk-factors/

Texas Suicide Prevention Toolkit
https://texassuicideprevention.org/information-library/texas-suicide-prevention-toolkit/

Suicide Prevention Resource Center: After a Suicide: A Toolkit for Schools
https://www.sprc.org/sites/default/files/resource-program/Aftera SuicideToolkitforSchools.pdf

Substance Abuse and mental Health Services Administration: A Toolkit for High Schools
https://store.samhsa.gov/product/Preventing-Suicide-A-Toolkit-for-High-Schools/SMA12-4669
RESOURCES

Videos:

Comprehensive School Suicide Prevention Program
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3CexP1ZmzEs

CBS Evening News: Teen Suicide is on the rise
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IL1XLQxD_Zo

TED Talk: This is my story. Sue Klebold
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BXlnrFpCu0c&feature=emb_logo
# Resources

**YOU - a caring adult**

**Suicide Prevention Resource Center**  
SPRC is one of the most comprehensive resources for suicide prevention

**Crisis Text Line**  
[https://www.crisistextline.org/](https://www.crisistextline.org/)  
Provides real-life human beings called, Crisis Counselors, who are trained to bring texters from a moment of crisis to calm

**Active Minds**  
[https://www.activeminds.org/](https://www.activeminds.org/)  
Active Minds focus on action and student advocacy in mental health  
Creating hope out of tragedy- founded by Alison Malmon when she was a junior at the University of Pennsylvania following the suicide of her older brother, and only sibling, Brian.

**National Suicide Prevention Lifeline**  
1-800-273-TALK

**Society of Prevention of Teen Suicide**  
Dedicated to helping reduce the problem of teen suicide by providing resources for teens, parents and educators

**The Trevor Project**  
A suicide prevention organization for LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning) youth

**Suicide Prevention APPS**  
vetted by bark.us  
Bark monitors online activities for potential issues like cyberbullying, sexual predators, adult content, depression, acts of violence, suicidal ideation, and more.
TOP RESILIENCE, MENTAL HEALTH & SUICIDE PREVENTION APPS