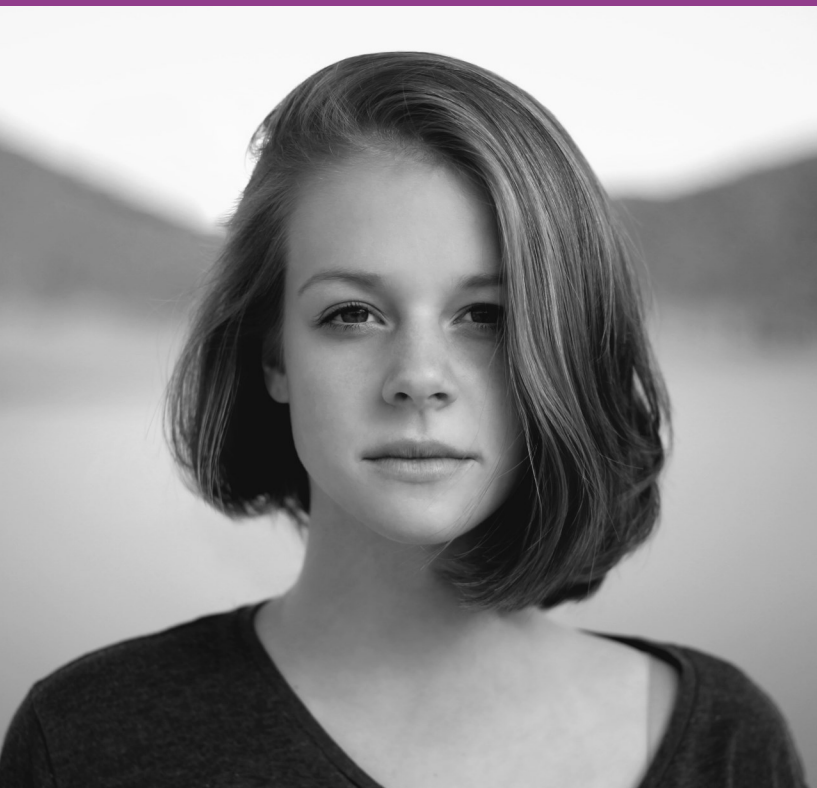




# SUICIDE PREVENTION MONTH

SEPTEMBER 2020



## September is Suicide Prevention Month

Over the past six months, the COVID-19 pandemic has affected individuals throughout the United States and around the world. Within this broader public health emergency, ongoing systemic racial inequities and health disparities have come to the forefront within our communities. These challenges have impacted the health, safety, and well-being of the broader population, as well as taken a significant and disproportionate toll on sub-populations, including health care and other essential workers, as well as Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) communities.

Beyond the physical impact of COVID-19, issues of job loss, financial insecurity, racism and bias, social isolation, and heightened stress and uncertainty should be acknowledged as risk factors for mental health challenges, as well as suicide. It is important to underscore that at this current time, there is no conclusive data suggesting that suicide rates have increased as a result of the pandemic. However, this is a critical time to promote and protect our mental health and wellness, just as our global community is taking specific actions to maintain our physical health.

In the United States, September is acknowledged as **Suicide Prevention Month**, with the week of September 6th-12th identified as **National Suicide Prevention Week**. Around the world, September 10th is recognized as **World Suicide Prevention Day**. The goal of suicide prevention events is to draw attention to this public health challenge and provide tools to make it easier to notice when someone is struggling and to offer support.

This year's theme of **Working Together to Prevent Suicide** is particularly fitting as we think about the importance of being connected to others and having a sense of belonging as protective factors for suicide. In this time of physical distancing, we have seen schools, worksites, health and behavioral health care services, and the media adapt and innovate to stay connected and preserve the continuity of information and services as best as they can. Individuals, families, neighbors, and friends have found creative ways to be there for one another, reinforcing the role that we all have in offering hope. Over the past year, collaboration at the statewide level has also helped advance the efforts of Governor Wolf's Suicide Prevention Task Force. Through public listening sessions, the stories, experiences, knowledge, and research shared was used to inform the goals and objectives of the new Pennsylvania statewide suicide prevention plan.

We all play a vital role in preventing suicide and saving lives. The impact of suicide can and does affect everyone. In recognizing Suicide Prevention Month, we can amplify the voices of those affected by suicide and take this important opportunity to spread the message that help and resources are available.

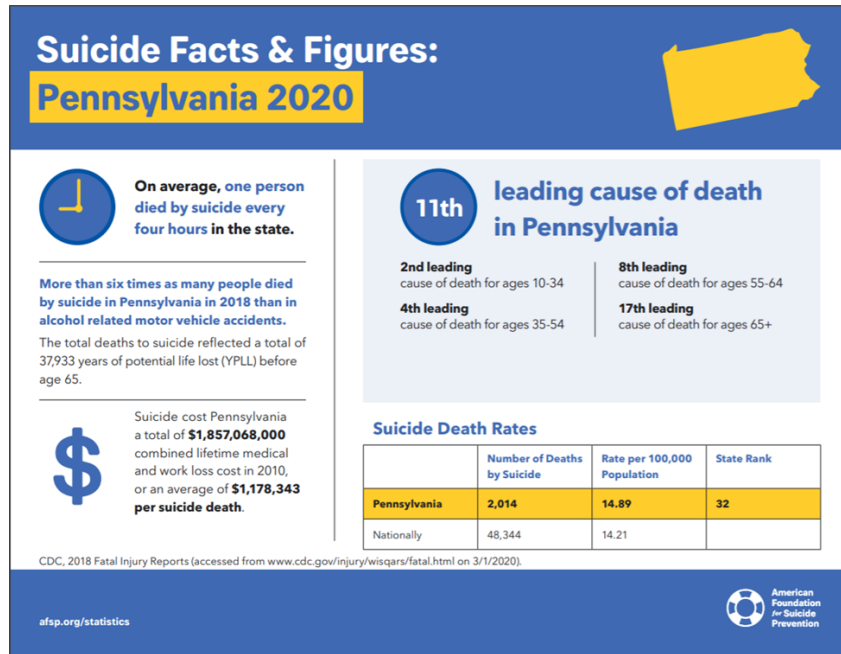
This informational packet includes ideas and suggestions for activities to help build awareness and take action to prevent suicide within your community.

*Thank you for your willingness to work together to prioritize suicide prevention and save lives.*



## Brief Statistics: Why Suicide Prevention Matters

We all want to live in healthy, happy communities that thrive in all aspects of wellness. Research shows us that the prevalence of suicide in the United States, as well as in Pennsylvania, continues to increase at a significant rate. Below is a graphic from the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention.



Data such as this helps us demonstrate the severity of the problem of suicide and the lasting impact it has on a community. The data doesn't just represent a number, but someone's mother or father, brother or sister, neighbor, or loved one who has, for one reason or another, temporarily lost hope.

When we promote resources like our hotlines and crisis centers, we frequently see increases in the number of people who reach out for help rather than struggling alone.

### Data Sources:

- [Center for Disease Control \(CDC\)](#)
- [Pennsylvania Youth Survey \(PAYS\)](#)
- [Department of Health Enterprise Data Dissemination Information Exchange \(EDDIE\)](#)
- [SPRC \(2020\) racial/ethnic trends in suicidal ideation, suicide attempts, and suicide deaths](#)



## Creating an Effective Message

Adapted with permission from *Moving Toward Prevention: A Guide for Reframing Sexual Violence*.  
© 2018 National Sexual Violence Resource Center and Berkeley Media Studies Group.

While focusing on prevention efforts can seem overwhelming at times, your words and actions can help save a life. Here are some overarching guidelines for the development of your messaging to prevent suicide.

### Evoked shared values

*Who are you attempting to influence? Schools? Faith-based institutions? First Responders?  
Identify the value you want them to work toward.*

**Example: Everyone deserves to feel safe, supported, and heard.**

### Acknowledge negative feelings, like discomfort, fear, or lingering doubts

*By acknowledging difficulty, doubt, and discomfort, you can help your audience manage their feelings and avoid using them as a reason to avoid the subject.*

**Example: I realize that talking about the issue of suicide can make some of us uncomfortable.**

### Model a journey toward change, it's starting point and pivotal moments

*Provide the next steps on how you will make prevention possible. Engage with survivors of suicide loss and individuals with lived experiences to light the way of healing for others.*

**Example: Many people have shared that hearing personal stories from survivors of suicide loss helped them feel connected and sparked hope, even in their most difficult times.**

### State the problem precisely

*Identify what piece of the problem you are wanting to address. Choose information or a fact to support it.*

**Example: Feelings of discomfort or shame make it hard for people to talk about suicide, and that silence makes it hard for people to reach out and find help.**

### Show Progress

*Identify examples (big or small) of how prevention efforts have helped your community.*

**Example: Trainings, such as QPR Suicide Prevention for Gatekeepers and Mental Health First Aid, have helped people learn to speak about these issues and offer support and assistance to people who are struggling with feelings of helplessness or despair.**

### Name concrete solutions

*Be realistic. Make it achievable.*

**Example: We will provide training to individuals throughout our community so they can learn how to recognize the signs, respond, and refer someone to safety.**



## Words Matter

It can feel uncomfortable, and sometimes even scary, to talk about mental health and suicide prevention. By finding the courage within ourselves to engage in open discussions, we can help save lives. Here are some tips that may help when engaging in courageous conversations.

- Practice using nonjudgmental language when discussing suicide.
- Present suicide as a preventable event.
- When talking about a suicide death, utilize language that is sensitive to the grieving family.
- Use objective terms for suicidal events, such as “death by suicide” or “non-fatal attempt.”
  - Avoid using the words "commit or complete suicide." The phrase "committed suicide" is usually associated with a sin or a crime, which suicide is neither. Using the words "completed suicide" conveys success or accomplishing something good, which suicide is not. The proper term for someone who has taken their own life is "died by suicide." Also acceptable is "killed him/her/theirself" or "took their own life."
- When discussing the frequency of suicide, always emphasize the importance of every single life. This helps demonstrate that one loss is too many.
- Always provide information for assistance, such as the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (1-800-273-8255).



### For additional information on safe messaging:

- [Recommendations for Reporting on Suicide](#): This guide important points for covering suicide, “do’s and don’ts” for safe reporting, and suggestions for online media/message boards/bloggers. Additional information can be found at <http://reportingonsuicide.org/>.
- [Safe and Effective Messaging for Suicide Prevention](#): Evidence-based recommendations from the Suicide Prevention Resource Center (SPRC).
- [Framework for Successful Messaging](#): The National Action Alliance has provided this framework for public messaging (e.g., posters, PSAs, social media, websites, etc.) to ensure that suicide-related messages are safe, strategic, positive, and in line with best practices.



## Mental Health and Suicide Prevention during a Pandemic

As we deal with ongoing stress and uncertainty around the current COVID-19 pandemic, it is more important than ever to bring mental health and well-being to the forefront of conversations. We all can play a vital role in promoting connectedness and resiliency.

### For information safe messaging during a pandemic:

- [Covid-19 Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Key Messages](#): The National Action Alliance has provided this framework for public messaging.
- [Resources for Safe-Messaging](#): Because we are all in this together, the National Alliance for Suicide Prevention compiled a list of resources to assist with safe messaging.
- [Reporting on Suicide during the COVID-19 Pandemic](#): It is well-documented that the way media report on suicide can impact risk of suicide and increased contagion. The World Health Organization and a variety of organizations have developed media recommendations to aid journalists in the best practices.

### For information on staying connected during a pandemic:

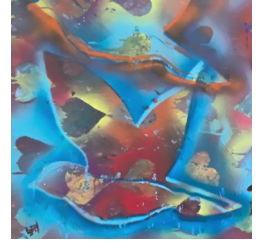
- [Active Minds](#): Active Minds has developed a resource page specifically geared toward helping during the pandemic.
- [Jana Marie Foundation](#): Jana Marie Foundation created a guide for building community while maintaining social distancing.

### Self-care during a Pandemic:

- [Mindfulness Exercises to Use During the Coronavirus Lockdown](#)
- [Tips for Coping with Coronavirus Stress](#)
- [Self-care for psychologists during the COVID-19 outbreak \(American Psychological Association\)](#)
- [Managing Stress and Anxiety](#)
- [Resources to Support Mental Health and Coping with the Coronavirus](#): a compiled list from SPRC of webpages and information sheets.
- [Mental Health Mobile Apps](#): a compiled list of mobile apps for mental health and wellness.



## Suicide Prevention Awareness: Sample Action Steps



- Use a [virtual background](#) or [Facebook frame](#) (available to access from 9/1-9/30) to help raise awareness.
- Host an educational training such as Question, Persuade, Refer (QPR) Suicide Prevention for Gatekeepers Course, Mental Health First Aid (MHFA), or Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST).
- Post signs with positive messages around your school, workplace, or town. Be sure to include the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline Number (1-800-273-8255 (TALK)) or Crisis Text Line (Text PA to 741741).
- Light a candle on September 10th to remember a loved one or to remind yourself that you matter.
- Work with your county commissioners to proclaim September as Suicide Prevention Month (see example at the end of packet).
- Check in with your County Suicide Prevention Taskforce to find ways to support local efforts.
- Share posters and videos from the [Prevent Suicide PA Annual PSA Contest](#) for high school students to help spread awareness.
  - [Find out more about the 2021 contest, launching in October 2020](#)
- Visit [Suicide Prevention Online Learning Center](#) and take a free suicide prevention training.
- Raise awareness about suicide prevention as a social justice issue within your community by sharing resources and education materials. Here are some links and resources:
  - <https://nami.org/Blogs/NAMI-Blog/September-2017/Suicide-Prevention-as-a-Social-Justice-Issue>
  - <https://mhttcnetwork.org/centers/global-mhttc/responding-covid-19-mental-health-disparities>
  - [https://watsoncoleman.house.gov/uploadedfiles/full\\_taskforce\\_report.pdf](https://watsoncoleman.house.gov/uploadedfiles/full_taskforce_report.pdf)

*The following national and international associations have developed resource guides containing additional lists of activities and ideas that can be implemented across settings:*

- International Association for Suicide Prevention (IASP): [Suggested activities](#)
  - IASP also developed guidelines on [how to Write a World Suicide Prevention Day Press Release](#)
- Suicide Prevention Resource Center: [Suicide Prevention Month Ideas for Action](#)



## Crisis Resources

You are not alone. Many organizations are working each and every day to support you and your efforts with suicide prevention. Please consider using these crisis lines and resources in your messaging during Suicide Prevention Month.

### ***National:***

- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: **1-800-273-8255 (TALK)** or visit <http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org/>
- Crisis Text Line: **TEXT PA to 741741** or visit <http://www.crisistextline.org/>
- The Trevor Project: 1-866-488-7386 or visit <https://www.thetrevorproject.org>
- Trans Lifeline: 1-877-565-8860 <https://www.translifeline.org>

### ***Pennsylvania:***

- [List](#) of Crisis Intervention contact information by county.
- [County Task Force Resources](#): By county, available contact information is provided for crisis, the Suicide Prevention Task Force, local chapter of AFSP, and other local mental health/suicide prevention resources.

## National and State Organizations

### ***National:***

- American Association of Suicidology (AAS): <http://www.suicidology.org/>
- American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP): <https://afsp.org/>
- Suicide Prevention Resource Center (SPRC): <http://www.sprc.org/>

### ***Pennsylvania:***

- Jana Marie Foundation: <http://www.janamariefoundation.org/>
- Aavidum: <http://aavidum.com>
- Prevent Suicide PA: <http://preventsuicidepa.org/>
- Pennsylvania Network for Student Assistance Services (PNSAS): <http://pnsas.org/>





## Social Media

### **Sample Social Media Posts** (to be copied or adapted):

*Today is World Suicide Prevention Day. Reach out to a friend and let them know you care.  
#JanaMarieFoundation #PreventSuicidePA*

*We all want our kids to grow up to be healthy, happy, and successful adults. If you know a young person who is experiencing a mental health concern or crisis, help is available. Text PA to 741741.  
#JanaMarieFoundation #PreventSuicidePA*

*It can feel scary and overwhelming when someone you love is experiencing a mental health crisis. Offering a listening ear and consistent support can be great ways you can show you care. Learn more at [preventsuicidepa.org](https://preventsuicidepa.org). #JanaMarieFoundation #PreventSuicidePA*

*You can play an important role in preventing suicide. Knowing the warning signs and how to ask the question can help save lives. Learn more at <https://janamariefoundation.org/candid-conversations/>. #JanaMarieFoundation #PreventSuicidePA*

*This year's World Suicide Prevention Day theme is "Working Together to Prevent Suicide." We want you to know that there are resources available and people who want are here for you. If you or a loved one is in need of crisis support call 1800-273-TALK (8255) (or you can insert local crisis number). #JanaMarieFoundation #PreventSuicidePA*

*Today is World Suicide Prevention Day – Working Together to Prevent Suicide. There is always help available. Visit <https://janamariefoundation.org> to learn more. #JanaMarieFoundation #PreventSuicidePA*

*Did you know Facebook has a way to reach out to a friend who may be in crisis? If you are concerned about a post you can contact your friend directly, or have Facebook send them a message that help is available. Learn more here:*

<https://www.facebook.com/fbsafety/photos/>

[a.197686146935898.42079.125459124158601/1041262189244952/?type=3&theater](https://www.facebook.com/fbsafety/photos/a.197686146935898.42079.125459124158601/1041262189244952/?type=3&theater) [specific to

Facebook] #JanaMarieFoundation #PreventSuicidePA



## Sample Proclamation

An official signing of a proclamation by your county commissioners is a great way to publicize the kick-off for Suicide Prevention Month and the activities that will be taking place throughout the month. Below is sample proclamation verbiage:

### Suicide Prevention Month 2020

### Suicide Prevention Day, September 10, 2020

WHEREAS, suicide is a leading cause of death in the United States; and

WHEREAS, in the state of Pennsylvania, one person dies by suicide every four hours, making it the second leading cause of death for ages 15-34 and the 4th leading cause of death for ages 35-54.; and

WHEREAS, nearly five million people in the United States have lost a loved one to suicide; and

WHEREAS, each member of our community is valued and irreplaceable; and

WHEREAS, talking openly about stress and psychological health builds trust, reduces barriers to care, and enables early intervention; and

WHEREAS, local and statewide suicide prevention efforts should be developed and encouraged to the maximum extent possible, and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED the [COUNTY] Board of Commissioners does hereby proclaim September 2020 as "Suicide Awareness and Prevention Month" and September 10, 2020 as "Suicide Awareness and Prevention Day" in [COUNTY].

Proclaimed this \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 2020.

[COUNTY] Board of Commissioners,

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name, Title



## Working Together.

Organizations across the state of Pennsylvania continue to work together to provide mental health and suicide prevention education and awareness events. Jana Marie Foundation, Garret Lee Smith Youth Suicide Prevention Grant, Prevent Suicide PA, and the Pennsylvania Network for Student Assistant Services are proud to provide this informational packet to help you build awareness and take action to prevent suicide within your community.

### About Jana Marie Foundation

Jana Marie Foundation harnesses the power of creative expression and dialogue to spark conversations, build connections, and promote mental wellness among young people and their communities. The organization envisions communities working together to knock down walls and transform emotional distress into resilience and hope. Jana Marie Foundation is located in Centre County, Pennsylvania.

<https://janamariefoundation.org>

### About Garrett Lee Smith Youth Suicide Prevention Grant

The Garrett Lee Smith Youth Suicide Prevention Grant is a five-year federal SAMHSA grant awarded to the Office of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services (OMHSAS) at the Department of Human Services. The project targets youth ages 10-24 and provides awareness, training, and screening activities to increase identification and improve continuity of care for youth at risk of suicide.

### About Prevent Suicide PA

Prevent Suicide PA supports those who are affected by suicide, provides education, awareness, and understanding by collaborating with the community to prevent suicide, and reduces the stigma associated with suicide. The organization envisions having a Commonwealth where every life is valued, that everyone has the support necessary to get help when needed, and that hope and healing abounds in every person.

<http://preventsuicidepa.org/>

### About Pennsylvania Network for Student Assistant Services (PNSAS)

The mission of the Pennsylvania Network for Student Assistance Services is to provide leadership for developing a safe and drug-free environment and mental health wellness in schools and communities across the commonwealth. Barriers to learning will be removed and student academic achievement will be enhanced through collaborative prevention, intervention, and postvention services.

<http://pnsas.org/>

