

Maine's Suicide Prevention Strategic Plan 2011-2016

***A Plan for Preventing Suicide in Maine
at the State and Community Level***

Preventing suicide is up to all of us!

INTRODUCTION

Suicide exacts an enormous toll on Maine's people. Suicide is the tenth leading cause of death among Maine's people and the leading cause of violent death. From 2005-2009, over 180 people died from suicide each year, seven times the number of people who died from homicide. Suicide and suicidal behaviors occur in all age groups, ethnic backgrounds and socioeconomic groups. The financial cost of suicide and suicidal behaviors from medical care and loss of productivity is in the millions of dollars every year. The emotional cost to family, friends and communities is incalculable.

The good news is that when suicide is approached as a public health problem, suicides can be prevented. Innovative programs and rigorous research are beginning to demonstrate that suicide rates can be reduced. The Maine Youth Suicide Prevention Program (MYSPP), www.maine.gov/suicide is a statewide initiative coordinated by the Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention in the Department of Health and Human Services. The MYSPP has been in existence since 1998. Multiple state agencies are involved in carrying out program activities including the offices of Behavioral Health, Substance Abuse and Child and Family Services in the DHHS and the departments of Education, Public Safety, Labor and Corrections. The program provides leadership and guidance to aid in the prevention of suicide. The Maine Youth Suicide Prevention Program (MYSPP) has been nationally recognized for its youth suicide prevention work for over a decade.

Recent statistics show a reduction in suicidal behaviors among Maine youth. However, the trend for suicide among Maine adults is following a disturbing direction with adult suicide rates, particularly among middle-aged men, increasing. At the September 2011 MYSPP Advisory Council meeting, a decision was made to expand the program from an exclusive focus on youth suicide prevention to prevention of suicide across the lifespan.

Over the past 2 years, the MYSPP has engaged in a strategic planning process to update the state's youth suicide plan. This involved obtaining extensive input through a series of facilitated meetings and significant individual and group work. In 2010, the program enlisted a small work group of individuals from diverse settings to research and develop an adult suicide prevention plan for the state. That adult focused draft plan was completed in 2011 and represented the first time Maine moved beyond its focus on youth suicide prevention.

The purpose of this 2011-2016 strategic plan is to lay out a strategy to reduce the burden of suicide in Maine by engaging state and local organizations to engage in suicide prevention through integration into existing programs and services. The plan establishes priorities for action over a five year period. The draft plan is distributed to solicit feedback from the people of Maine to ensure a responsible and responsive approach to suicide prevention.

The work is hard but the path is clear: suicide can be prevented. Preventing suicide is up to all of us. YOU can be part of preventing suicide in Maine.

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* NOTE: SL refers to state level and reflects a need to state level oversight, leadership or programming; CL refers to Community Level reflecting those activities that would be expected to take place at the local level.

Because suicide takes a life in Maine every two days

Goal 1: Statewide leadership and coordination guides suicide prevention among Maine people.

A structure of state and local organizations is necessary to coordinate and maximize use of resources, to increase knowledge of effective suicide prevention and to integrate suicide prevention into existing programs and services.

Objective 1: Increase coordination, collaboration and leadership at the state and community levels to support suicide prevention activities.

Activity 1: Form sustainable state and local partnerships to lead the advancement of suicide prevention in Maine. (SL, CL)*

Activity 2: Maintain the commitment of state and partner organizations to integrate suicide prevention efforts. (SL, CL)

Activity 3: Develop and maintain a listing of state and local community suicide prevention stakeholders to enhance coordination and communication. (SL)

Activity 4: Collaborate with national, regional and other state suicide prevention programs. (SL)

Objective 2: Increase the membership of the Maine Suicide Prevention Program Advisory Council to broaden representation from diverse stakeholders and enhance leadership capacity.

Activity 1: Identify and seek commitments from stakeholder groups to be represented on the Advisory Council. (SL)

Activity 2: Build connections to District Public Health Coordinating Councils. (SL, CL)

Activity 3: Seek representation from Maine Native American tribes. (SL)

Activity 4: Identify leadership for the Advisory Council among community members with expertise and interest in suicide prevention. (SL and CL)

Objective 3: Expand capacity to provide data and informational resources to the community.

Activity 1: Implement a Maine Violent Death Reporting System to systematically collect suicide and violent death data. (SL)

Activity 2: Ensure that suicide and self-injury questions are included on surveys. (SL)

Activity 3: Collect, analyze and disseminate death, hospital discharge, emergency department and physician data on suicide and violence in Maine. (SL)

Activity 4: Gather and provide information on evidence based suicide prevention programs and interventions to Maine stakeholders. (SL)

Activity 5: Provide resource materials through a state level resource center and website with links to evidence-based resources. (SL)

Activity 6: Produce and disseminate an annual report on suicide and violence in Maine. (SL)

Objective 4: Identify and seek support for suicide prevention programming to reduce suicide in Maine.

Activity 1: Identify and disseminate information on funding opportunities to prevent suicide across the lifespan. (SL, CL)

Activity 2: Seek funding to support state and local level implementation of evidence-based suicide prevention programs and services. (SL & CL)

Activity 3: Build upon collaborations among public and private sectors when seeking funding. (SL & CL)

Activity 4: Provide training and technical assistance to enhance effective implementation of evidence-based suicide prevention programs and services. (SL & CL)

Because people need access to comprehensive health care
Goal 2: Maine's people can access suicide prevention and intervention services in health care settings across the state.

People, including those at high risk for suicide, more frequently visit their primary care providers or hospital emergency departments, rather than mental health care providers, when they are thinking about suicide and even during times of crises. Intervention – screening, assessment, treatment, and referral – through primary care and emergency department practices has the most potential for identifying and assisting the greatest number of people across the lifespan who have attempted or are contemplating suicide. To prevent suicide, people need to be able to access the care they require. Integration of health and behavioral health services at the practice level, and coordination of referrals and services with existing mental health resources in communities is vital to this effort.

Objective 1: Increase the number of Primary Care Practices that implement evidence-based suicide prevention interventions (such as the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE) Primary Care Toolkit) as a standard model of care.

Activity 1: Educate primary care practitioners on the efficacy of and methodology for integrated suicide screening, assessment, treatment and referral. (SL & CL)

Activity 2: Partner with the Maine Primary Care Association to integrate suicide prevention screening, assessment, and treatment within behavioral health care in Maine's Federally Qualified Health Centers using the WICHE Primary Care Toolkit. (SL & CL)

Activity 3: Partner with the Maine Association of School-based Health Centers to ensure that evidence-based standardized suicide screening and intervention programs are used in all School-based Health Centers. (SL & CL)

Activity 4: Seek additional partners to bring behavioral health integration and evidence-based suicide prevention practices into health care practices across Maine. (SL & CL)

Objective 2: Increase the number of health settings that routinely screen for depression and assess for risk of suicide using evidence-based standardized tools.

Activity 1: Partner with primary care offices and school based health centers to implement evidence-based screening (eg. Patient Health Questionnaire depression screen (PHQ-9) and treatment programs for patients with depression. (SL, CL)

Activity 2: Partner with the Maine Hospital Association and the Maine crisis system to implement uniform screening and referral protocols in hospital emergency departments and other health care settings for people at risk of suicide and seen for a risk assessment. (SL & CL)

Activity 3: Partner with Maine's Mental Health Crisis providers to develop and adopt a uniform set of protocols to inform suicide risk assessment, intervention, follow-up and postvention with Maine's people at risk for suicide. (SL & CL)

Objective 3: Increase the number of health care settings that implement the use of standard practices to monitor and follow-up with individuals screened as at risk for suicide and referred on to outpatient support.

Activity 1: Develop and implement discharge planning guidelines for health care settings that include the use of written follow-up plans for individuals at risk for suicide. (SL & CL)

Activity 2: Develop materials and procedures to ensure that at-risk clients, who receive a written, individualized follow-up plan from the assessing provider, receive the recommended follow-up care. (SL & CL)

Because preventing suicide is up to all of us

Goal 3: Maine’s people are protected through integration of effective suicide prevention efforts within public and private organizations statewide.

Effective programs and practices that can help reduce the incidence of suicide among Maine people must be implemented at the state, regional and local levels. State leadership is necessary to guide the implementation of promising and evidence-based programs for various settings. Implementation of these programs at the local level ensures the most effective impact on people at increased risk for suicide.

Objective 1: Increase the number of public and private organizations statewide that implement effective suicide prevention programs and practices within their organizations.

Activity 1: Identify and reach out to key public and private organizations for integration of evidence-based or promising suicide prevention strategies. (SL & CL)

Activity 2: Promote the integration of evidence-based suicide prevention programming for organizations in Maine including, schools, colleges, correctional centers, employers, community groups and other community-based organizations.) (SL & CL)

Activity 3: Seek funding to support the integration of promising and evidence-based suicide prevention programs and to evaluate the impact of these programs (SL)

Activity 4: Disseminate data and information on training/education opportunities and links to evidence-based resources that support integration of suicide prevention strategies into state agencies, state-contracted organizations and local programs and organizations. (SL & CL)

Objective 2: Increase the number of organizations serving high-risk populations that are prepared to identify and intervene with individuals who are at risk for suicide.

Activity 1: Provide guidance and technical assistance to organizations to develop and implement suicide prevention and intervention protocols to best serve high risk populations. (SL & CL)

Activity 2: Provide guidance and technical assistance to agencies that provide suicide screening, assessment and referral resources for at risk individuals. (SL & CL)

Activity 3: Promote wide awareness and use of the Statewide Crisis Hotline (1-888-568-1112) as a means of accessing assistance and support for individuals at heightened risk of suicide. (SL & CL)

Activity 4: Provide guidance and technical assistance to ensure that all Maine

correctional facilities follow the National Commission on Correctional HealthCare standards for suicide prevention. (SL)

Activity 5: Provide guidance and technical assistance to ensure that community corrections programs use standardized suicide assessment and treatment protocols and develop working relationships with mental health crisis, substance abuse and other referral agencies. (SL & CL)

Activity 6: Interface with veteran and active military organizations to ensure that their personnel are prepared to address the increased risk of suicide present in veterans and active military personnel. (SL & CL)

Activity 7: Work with the Office of Child and Family Services and other appropriate organizations to ensure that youth in foster care, transitioning out of foster care or those in other high-risk settings are supported in maintaining safety and stability. (SL)

Activity 8: Provide information and best-practice interventions to organizations serving GLTBQ youth and adults. (SL & CL)

Activity 9: Develop, modify and disseminate uniform screening and response protocols for age and situation-specific at-risk groups for integration within community programs including public health nursing, adult protective services programs, substance abuse programs, elder care programs, and behavioral health programs, etc. (SL & CL)

Activity 10: Provide information and technical assistance to state licensing agencies to develop regulations requiring suicide prevention standards for facilities caring for populations at high risk for suicide (eg. Nursing homes, Group homes, etc.). (SL)

Objective 3: Increase the number of employers that integrate effective suicide prevention programs within their organizations

Activity 1: Disseminate suicide prevention and intervention protocol guidelines to Maine employers, prioritizing those who hire individuals in vulnerable populations. (SL & CL)

Activity 2: Provide technical assistance to employers that integrate suicide prevention and intervention protocols within their organizations. (SL)

Activity 3: Provide technical assistance to employers that integrate suicide prevention, intervention and postvention protocols within the Employee Assistance Programs of Maine's employers. (SL & CL)

Objective 4: Increase the number of schools (elementary through post-secondary) that implement evidence-based or promising suicide prevention programming

Activity 1: Support schools to implement comprehensive suicide prevention programming such as the Lifelines Suicide Prevention Program model. (SL & CL)

Activity 2: Promote the adoption of suicide prevention expectations into the job descriptions of all school-based clinical and behavioral health staff. (CL)

Activity 3: Support schools to maintain and update Comprehensive School Health Education (CSHE) curricula K-12 to include mental health key concepts. (SL & CL)

Activity 5: Support schools to implement best practice and/or promising programs designed to improve outcomes for at-risk students including improvements to school climate and bullying prevention. (SL & CL)

Activity 6: Disseminate resources that promote health during periods of significant student transitions such as moving schools, graduating high school, taking a new job, etc. (SL & CL)

Activity 7: Students in need are identified and referred to appropriate helping services. (CL)

Objective 5: Improve access to and community linkages among schools, mental health, substance abuse, correctional services and suicide prevention services statewide.

Activity 1: Promote the development and functioning of provider referral networks in Public Health districts, school communities, tribes and other settings. (SL & CL)

Activity 2: Provide technical support to service providers, schools, employers and other programs to follow evidence-based guidance and routinely follow-up with people who are known to have attempted suicide or expressed suicidal behaviors. (SL & CL)

Objective 6: Increase the number of faith-based organizations adopting policies and programs promoting suicide prevention and effective intervention/postvention.

Activity 1: Develop/disseminate appropriate suicide prevention/intervention education and resource material for clergy and faith-based community use. (SL & CL)

Activity 2: Provide technical assistance to existing coalitions of faith-based organizations to integrate suicide prevention efforts into their work. (SL & CL)

Objective 7: Increase the number of survivors of suicide who receive support and acceptance during their grief and who participate in suicide prevention efforts statewide.

Activity 1: Provide information on suicide survivor needs and support resources in all MSPP training programs. (SL)

Activity 2: Convene, train and support a volunteer Suicide Survivor Speakers Bureau to help increase awareness of the impact of suicide and to spread effective suicide prevention messages. (SL & CL)

Activity 3: Promote the creation and continuation of suicide survivor support programs across Maine. (SL & CL)

Because people need to know how to help prevent suicide

Goal 4: Professionals working with Maine people are competent in suicide prevention, intervention and postvention.

An adequately trained and alert professional health, public health, behavioral health, public safety, education, labor, and corrections workforce is vital in the effort to identify and intervene with those at risk for suicide. Training and education programs are the cornerstone of suicide prevention programs. Access to up-to-date education and training and best-practice curricula is essential to prepare professionals in effective suicide prevention.

Objective 1: Increase the number of professional organizations that develop, implement and promote effective clinical and professional practices for suicide prevention in Maine.

Activity 1: Engage relevant stake holders, in the development, review or adaptation of evidence-based or promising practices for suicide prevention educational materials for the training of Maine clinicians and professionals working with at risk populations. (SL & CL)

Activity 2: Widely disseminate best practice suicide prevention, intervention and postvention training and education to Maine clinicians and professionals working with people at risk of suicide. (SL)

Activity 3: Modify or create and disseminate suicide prevention training modules to address the needs of governmental, professional, educational and volunteer organizations statewide. (SL)

Activity 4: Organizations integrate effective professional/clinical suicide prevention practices and train their staff members in effective practices. (CL)

Objective 2: Increase the proportion of clinicians and professionals in Maine who are knowledgeable about the increased risk of suicide associated with a traumatic history and who develop trauma informed practices.

Activity 1: Promote the integration and use of assessments for adverse childhood events or another standardized trauma history assessment for clients seen by health, mental health and substance abuse providers. (SL & CL)

Activity 2: Provide education and support for professionals working with Maine trauma survivors to develop trauma-informed practices and procedures. (SL & CL)

Objective 3: Increase the number of trained suicide prevention gatekeepers who maintain

their skills in multiple settings statewide.

Activity 1: Develop and implement gatekeeper training for a variety of audiences serving people of all ages statewide. (SL & CL)

Activity 2: Provide follow-up, consultation and practice updates to trained gatekeepers statewide. (SL)

Objective 4: Increase knowledge of the risk of suicide associated with access to lethal means and implement effective methods-to reduce access to lethal means for people at increased risk for suicide.

NOTE: Lethal means include firearms, medications and drugs and other common means used for suicide.

Activity 1: Educate Maine professionals working with people at-risk for suicide to routinely ask about the presence of all types of lethal means in the home and educate their clients about actions to reduce associated risks. (SL)

Activity 2: Provide training and information to law enforcement officials and other first responders to recognize the importance of and to follow written protocols to assess for the presence and the removal of lethal means from the environment of suicidal individuals. (SL)

Activity 3: Disseminate data and research describing the benefits of strengthening lethal means access regulations to prevent suicide. (SL & CL)

Activity 4: Promote public awareness about the importance of restricting access to all types of lethal means around vulnerable individuals as an important way to prevent suicide. (SL & CL)

Objective 5: Increase the readiness of Maine professionals to address suicide risk through the provision of continuing education opportunities that provide advanced knowledge in suicide-related topics.

Activity 1: Provide Maine professionals with an annual conference that increases understanding and knowledge of recent advances in the field of suicide prevention (Beyond the Basics of Suicide Conference). (SL)

Activity 2: Promote and support a broad range of educational presentations for professionals working with vulnerable populations that address suicide prevention, intervention and postvention topics. (SL & CL)

Activity 3: Create and/or modify education and training offerings in various formats, including electronic, to meet the needs of health, public health, behavioral health, public safety, education, labor, and corrections professionals.

Because seeking help saves lives...

Goal 5: A culture of help-seeking for people in need exists in Maine

As long as suicide is seen as a private tragedy, associated with individual and familial shame and failure, it is difficult for suffering people and their families to seek help. Opening a societal discussion about the prevalence of suicide and its risk factors, including mental illness and depression, and changing the perception of seeking help, can begin to break down these barriers.

Objective 1: Increase public awareness that suicide is a preventable public health problem, and help is available.

Activity 1: Develop and promote media messages to increase the number of adults who know how to get help when they or someone they know is contemplating or has attempted suicide. (SL & CL)

Activity 2: Develop and maintain the Maine Suicide Prevention Program website as a dynamic resource for suicide prevention information and data to professional, lay and youth audiences and as a resource for training opportunities related to suicide prevention. (SL)

Activity 3: Promote awareness of Maine Suicide Prevention Program resources for suicide prevention among key state and local stakeholders and the general public. (SL & CL)

Activity 4: Promote the continued use of the Office of Substance Abuse Information Resource Center as a clearing house and public access point for suicide prevention information and resources. (SL & CL)

Objective 2: Increase the understanding of the general public in Maine that mental health problems are treatable, and that mental health and substance abuse prevention and treatment services are part of overall health care.

Activity 1: Educate individuals on how to advocate for their own and their family's mental health care. (SL, CL)

Activity 2: Identify and promote ways to decrease stigma and misperceptions surrounding mental illness, suicidal behavior, and substance abuse issues/conditions. (SL & CL)

Activity 3: Provide information and resources to organizations, communities and others to underscore the importance of seeking help in moments of distress for all people. (SL & CL)

Objective 3: Improve media practices about suicide to reduce stigma and increase public awareness that suicide is a preventable public health problem and help is available for

those in need.

Activity 1: Educate media representatives in Maine about safe reporting practices regarding suicide and the risk of media contagion. (SL)

Activity 2: Monitor print and electronic media sites and encourage accurate and responsible depictions about suicidal behavior, mental illness and related issues. (SL, CL)

Activity 3: Provide education and technical assistance to participants of MSPP training and education programs in order to increase understanding of the key issues surrounding media contagion. (SL & CL)

Activity 4: Promote the development and dissemination of media and social media messages that normalize help-seeking behavior. (SL & CL)

Objective 4: Increase active outreach to identified populations *at higher risk of suicide and attempts* through traditional media, social media and other venues.

Activity 1: Partner with visible community and statewide organizations to identify champions within at-risk groups to increase visibility of help-seeking messages. Promote the message that help-seeking behavior is a sign of strength. (SL & CL)

Activity 2: Provide resources to workplaces for dissemination of information that promotes help-seeking to maintain health. (SL & CL)

Activity 3: Partner with organizations and programs serving the needs of Maine's elders to increase effective outreach efforts targeting isolated, depressed and terminally ill elders without adequate supports. (SL & CL)

Activity 4: Partner with active military, veteran organizations and programs to ensure optimal outreach activity to Maine's military personnel, veterans and their families. (SL & CL)

Activity 5: Explore effective ways to access and engage non-college bound youth 19-25 and middle-age men to address their increased risk for suicidal behavior. (SL & CL)