A Ray of Hope: The Status of Suicide & Suicide Prevention in San Diego County Today

Data compiled in the Report Card describe the overall status of suicide and key efforts to prevent it in San Diego County. The latest data reveal that help-seeking among San Diegans is dramatically up, and for the first time in recent history suicide is down. Compared to 2013, the rate of suicides in 2014 declined by 5.7%, which means 21 fewer people died by suicide.

The number of crisis calls to the local Access and Crisis hotline rose 15% showing the rise in help-seeking. Visits to the It’s Up to Us suicide prevention and mental health website and associated Facebook fans increased 36% and 21%, respectively. Moreover, to meet the steady demand for gatekeeper training, the number of Suicide Prevention Council-sponsored Question, Persuade, and Refer (QPR) suicide prevention trainings rose 17%. Despite a small increase (3%) in the number of discharges from local Emergency Departments for self-inflicted injuries and poisoning, as a whole the data is encouraging, offering hope to all as we strive together toward the goal of zero suicides in San Diego.

Consistent with the County’s Live Well San Diego vision (a comprehensive plan to improve the health and promote wellness for all San Diego County residents), the SPC Report to the Community addresses Live Well San Diego’s Living Safely component and its Pursuing Policy & Environmental Change strategy by sharing news that will help us work together to achieve the collective vision of a protected, safe, and resilient San Diego. To learn more about Live Well San Diego, visit www.livewellsd.org.
What do the data reveal about suicide? What is being done about it?

This report card brings together the most recent available data from multiple sources for the years 2010 through 2014 to present a profile of suicide in San Diego County. Information from the County Medical Examiner, the Access and Crisis Line, hospital emergency departments, students’ self-reports, suicide prevention awareness campaigns and gatekeeper-training programs are presented in this report card in order to provide a more complete understanding of the status of suicide and efforts to prevent suicide in San Diego County.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>2010</th>
<th>2011</th>
<th>2012</th>
<th>2013</th>
<th>2014</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Total Suicide Deaths</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Number</td>
<td>369</td>
<td>392</td>
<td>413</td>
<td>441</td>
<td>420</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Rate per 100,000 people</td>
<td>11.9</td>
<td>12.6</td>
<td>13.2</td>
<td>14.0</td>
<td>13.2</td>
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<td>2. Emergency Department (ED) Discharges: Self-Inflicted Injury/Poisoning</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Number</td>
<td>2,422</td>
<td>2,511</td>
<td>2,788</td>
<td>2,870</td>
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<tr>
<td>b. Rate per 100,000 people</td>
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<td>80.6</td>
<td>89.1</td>
<td>91.1</td>
<td>n/a</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Crisis Calls: Access &amp; Crisis Line</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>14,314</td>
<td>13,450</td>
<td>15,834</td>
<td>17,635</td>
<td>20,267</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. It’s Up to Us Media Campaign</td>
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<tr>
<td>a. Website Visits</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>53,311</td>
<td>66,594</td>
<td>98,960</td>
<td>134,574</td>
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<td>b. Facebook Fans</td>
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<td>n/a</td>
<td>1,802</td>
<td>5,429</td>
<td>6,576</td>
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<td>5. Students: Seriously Considered Suicide</td>
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<td></td>
<td>18.2%</td>
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<td>20.0%</td>
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<td>6. QPR Suicide Prevention Gatekeeper Training</td>
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<td>a. Presentations</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>97</td>
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<tr>
<td>b. Participants</td>
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<td>738</td>
<td>3,596</td>
<td>2,041</td>
<td>2,015</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

n/a=data not available

Report Card Indicators: Type and Source
1) Total number and rate of persons that died by suicide according to County of San Diego HHSA, Medical Examiner’s Database. Source: County of San Diego HHSA, Emergency Medical Services, Medical Examiner Database, 2010-2014. Population Data from SANDAG. 2) Total number, rates of persons discharged from emergency department that had self-inflicted harm from 2010-2013, according to County of San Diego HHSA, Emergency Medical Services. Source: The County of San Diego HHSA, Emergency Medical Services, Medical Examiner Database, 2004-2013. Population Data from SANDAG. 3) Total number of self-reported crisis calls to the San Diego County Access and Crisis Line from 2010-2014, according to OptumHealth. Source: Optum-Health. 4) Total number of persons that visited the It’s Up to Us media campaign website and became a fan of the campaign Facebook page from 2011-2014, according to Civilian Agency. Website launched August 19, 2010 and Facebook page launched November 8, 2011. Source: Civilian Agency. 5) Total percent of youth (9th and 11th Grade) that had suicide ideation (surveys conducted every other year from 2004-2014) per California Healthy Kids Survey. Source: California Health Kids Survey (CHKS), Developed by WestEd for the California Department of Education, 2004-2014. The total percent is an average of the 9th and 11th grade percents. 6) Total number of Question, Persuade, and Refer (QPR) trainings held, people trained for suicide prevention conducted in San Diego County through Suicide Prevention Council and tracked by CHIP. Source: Community Health Improvement Partners.

Call the San Diego Access and Crisis Line (ACL) at (888) 724-7240 to receive FREE assistance 7 days a week/24 hours a day. For mental health and suicide prevention resources, information about free suicide prevention trainings, or to use chat services with ACL Monday-Friday (4pm-10pm), visit www.Up2SD.org. For more information on the San Diego County Suicide Prevention Council visit www.spcsandiego.org.
Suicide Prevention At All Ages

Suicide is a tragic and preventable public health problem. In 2013, suicide was the tenth leading cause of death for all ages nationally. Suicidal behavior is complex. Some risk factors such as losing a spouse, retirement, or graduating vary with age, gender, and ethnic group. Additionally, risk factors for suicide frequently occur in combination.

In this report, we focus on suicide rates and suicide prevention efforts at different ages. We include the following: (1) an updated suicide report card that includes data spanning 2010-2014; (2) information about how age trends compare locally; (3) an update of suicide and suicide prevention in San Diego County today; (4) information on suicide and suicide prevention for different age groups, from youth to older adults; (5) information about the San Diego County Suicide Prevention Council (SPC); and (6) a timeline that reflects the key milestones of suicide prevention on local and national levels, and what you can do to help.

In addition, this report includes highlights of high impact prevention programs and resources, such as Yellow Ribbon Suicide Prevention Program (YRSSP), Survivors of Suicide Loss (SOSL) support groups, and Union of Pan Asian Communities (UPAC)’s Elder Multicultural Access & Support Services. This report’s contents can benefit all stakeholder groups, and bring great value to the continued prevention efforts across San Diego County.

“It always seems impossible until it’s done!” - Nelson Mandela

Suicide Trends for All Ages

While more than half of all suicides occur in the 35 to 64 year-old age group, 54% of people over the age of 65 are actually at higher risk of suicide. In 2014, the suicide rate (per 100,000 people) was 20.6 in the 65 to 84 year-old age group and 31.4 in the 85 and older age group.

For comparison, the suicide rate in the 35 to 64 year-old age group was 19.0. Adolescents aged 10 to 19 (2.0 per 100,000 people) and young adults aged 20 to 34 (12.0 per 100,000) had the lowest suicide rates in 2014. These data reflect a consistent trend in San Diego County over the last 5 years.
Suicide Among Youth + Transitional Age Youth (10-24 years)

Suicide is a serious public health problem that affects even young people. For youth between the ages of 10 and 24, suicide is the third leading cause of death.

Suicide affects all youth, but some groups are at a higher risk than others. Boys are more likely to die from suicide than girls. Of the reported suicides in the 10 to 24 year-old age group, 81% of the deaths were males and 19% were females.

Girls, however, are more likely to report attempting suicide than boys. Several factors can put a young person at risk for suicide (see sidebar). It’s important to look for risk factors and connect a person at risk to resources. However, just having these risk factors does not always mean that suicide will be attempted.

Amongst those who do, more young people survive suicide attempts than actually die. Saving young lives at risk involves a diverse range of interventions and protective factors, including effective assessment and treatment of those with mental health disorders.

Some protective factors that help are: a) family connectedness and school connectedness, b) reduced access to firearms, c) safe schools, d) academic achievement, and e) self-esteem.

Yellow Ribbon Suicide Prevention Program

The Yellow Ribbon Suicide Prevention Program (YRSPP) uses the public health model to address youth/teen/young adult suicide. The program focuses on ages 10-25 and the trusted adults that interact with this age group. Through education, training, and public awareness campaigns, YRSPP helps reduce stigma associated with asking for help.

YRSPP provides suicide prevention presentations and trainings as well as technical assistance for schools, colleges, health classes, after-school programs, parent organizations, civic groups, service clubs and community-based organizations. You can request programs like Ask 4 Help!, a curriculum for the youth you work with, that provides young people with knowledge to increase help-seeking behavior for themselves or on behalf of others.

You can also be trained in Be A Link! adult gatekeeper training which provides participants (school staff, family, community members) with knowledge to help identify and respond to a young person at risk or in crisis and help connect them to resources to ensure that they receive the help they need. For further information, or to request a training, presentation, or volunteer opportunities, visit www.yellowribbonsd.org, email yellowribbonsoca@earthlink.net, or call 760-635-5904.

RISK FACTORS

- History of previous suicide attempts
- Family history of suicide
- History of depression or other mental illness
- Alcohol or drug abuse
- Stressful life event or loss
- Easy access to lethal methods
- Exposure to the suicidal behavior of others
- Non-suicidal self injury

"I learned that you are not alone, that people are there for us and that there is more help than I thought."
- Hoover High School Student
Suicide Among Adults (25-64 years)

Traditionally, suicide prevention efforts have focused mostly on youth and older adults, but recent analysis confirms that there have been substantial increases in suicide rates among middle-aged adults in the United States. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) analyzed data to examine trends for adults aged 35-64 years over a decade. The trends were examined by sex, age group, race/ethnicity, state and region of residence, and mechanism of suicide. The results of this analysis indicate that the annual, age-adjusted suicide rate among this age group increased 28.4% from 13.7 per 100,000 population in 1999 to 17.6 in 2010.

The findings underscore the need for suicide prevention measures directed at middle-aged populations. However, locally we see zero decrease and stable rate so it’s important to continue to maintain our focus. For every one suicide there are at least six others affected by the loss. These survivors of suicide loss are at higher risk for suicide due to the loss they suffered and therefore it is important to transition from suicide postvention to suicide prevention strategies. A comprehensive approach looks beyond one or two strategies, and uses a multi-pronged, and coordinated system of strategies (such as those in the Suicide Prevention Action Plan for San Diego County and the convening of the Suicide Prevention Council) that addresses suicide risk from proactive prevention to intervention to postvention.

Survivors of Suicide Loss

Survivors of Suicide Loss (SOSL) reaches out to and supports people who have lost a loved one to suicide. Their goal is to give survivors a place where they can be comfortable expressing themselves, a place to find support, comfort, resources, and hope.

SOSL offers two main programs: Survivor Support Program which includes: facilitated support groups (10 monthly groups at 7 different locations all around San Diego County), individual phone and email support, SOSL support packet, quarterly newsletter, website resources, personal stories, and supportive information.

The Suicide Awareness & Prevention Program offers a community outreach team and speaking engagement opportunities with emergency responders, schools/colleges, places of worship, local businesses, and other community organizations. For more information, to attend a support group, or to volunteer, please visit www.SOSLsd.org, email info@soslsd.org, or call 619-482-0297 (support), 619-333-0813 (office).

Check Your Mood!

San Diego County’s “Check Your Mood” Depression Screening Week aims to increase awareness about depression and provide mental health resources to the general public.

We invite you to participate by hosting a site or checking your mood during the week of October 4, 2015.

For more information: 619-521-7456
One of the leading causes of suicide among the elderly is depression; often undiagnosed and/or untreated. Later in life depression is associated with decreased physical, cognitive, and social functioning, and increased problems with self-care. While depression is NOT a normal part of aging, some older adults do experience depression. In older adults depression is very treatable.

Although older adults attempt suicide less often than those in other age groups, they have a higher completion rate. For all ages combined, there is an estimated 1 suicide for every 100-200 attempts. Over the age of 65, there is 1 estimated suicide for every 4 attempted suicides.

Unfortunately, many older adults are not getting the help that they need. It is important to talk openly about suicide, depression, and mental illness, and identify local resources and referrals for those who might need additional psychiatric and/or support services. With appropriate help, older adults can continue to thrive and lead enjoyable lives.

**Union of Pan Asian Communities: Elder Multicultural Access & Support Services**

Union of Pan Asian Communities Elder Multicultural Access and Support Services (EMASS) works hand in hand with partners to outreach to older adults with mild to moderate depression. Services are designed to address mental health issues, provide prevention activities and increase access to mental health care.

EMASS community centers are located in Escondido, El Cajon, and the Somali Family Service Center. EMASS community centers follow the Big 4 Brain Fitness Lifestyle, namely nutrition education, physical exercises, mental exercises, and socialization. The goal is to strengthen seniors’ capacity to remain independent and improve the quality of their lives. Bi-weekly social and recreational activities are available. For more information, visit www.upacsd.com, email ahajek@upacsd.com, or call 760-233-1987.
The San Diego County Suicide Prevention Council

The SPC is a community-wide collaborative focused on realizing a vision of zero suicides in San Diego County. Our mission is to prevent suicide and its devastating consequences in San Diego County.

On April 1, 2010, the County of San Diego Health and Human Services Agency (HHSA) awarded Community Health Improvement Partners (CHIP) a contract to form and establish an inter-agency council to create, introduce, and drive implementation of a Suicide Prevention Action Plan (SPAP) for San Diego County, the first of its kind in California. Today, with continued support from the County of San Diego, the council provides oversight, guidance, and collective support to implement the recommendations of the SPAP. For more information on the plan or to join SPC visit www.spcsandiego.org

SPC creates this annual report to the community in order to share the most recent information available on the status of suicide and local suicide prevention efforts in the County. The goal of this report is to bring awareness to the community, and ultimately, to help all of us reduce regional suicide rates. This report is also intended to reduce the stigma associated with suicide and mental illness and connect people with available resources.

What You Can Do To Help:

- Volunteer with a suicide prevention organization
- Participate with SPC www.spcsandiego.org
- Host a QPR suicide prevention Gatekeeper training
- Take a QPR suicide prevention Gatekeeper training
- Visit the It’s Up to Us website www.Up2SD.org

- Become a Facebook fan of It’s Up to Us www.facebook.com/up2sd
- Donate to a local suicide prevention organization
- Share this information and talk to your family and friends about suicide and mental health; you can help reduce stigma
- Check out www.livewellsd.org to see how you can join the Live Well San Diego efforts in your region