San Diego County Suicide Prevention Council Annual Report to the Community 2017

News You Can Use

The San Diego County Suicide Prevention Council (SPC) Annual Report to the Community provides a template for sharing suicide prevention resources and community-level data on suicide and help-seeking behavior. It is intended to raise community awareness that suicide is everyone’s problem, stimulate collaborative efforts to connect people to resources and, ultimately, reduce regional suicide rates.

The theme of this year’s Annual Report is News You Can Use. It provides general yet critical information and language that everyone can use each and every day to identify and effectively communicate with compassion to those who may be at risk of suicide. As part of the Annual Report, the Report Card provides overall data regarding suicide and highlights the effectiveness of prevention efforts in San Diego County. This year, once again, the data show that we are “holding our ground” with respect to progress made in recent years.

Compared to 2015, the suicide rate in 2016 remained stable at 13.1 per 100,000 population, which remains the lowest suicide rate in five years. Further gains in help-seeking behavior were also maintained. Crisis calls to the local Access & Crisis hotline held this year at approximately 26% of call volume. Annual visits to the It’s Up to Us suicide prevention and mental health media campaign website increased 17% in 2016, on top of the 57% increase in 2015. The campaign’s total number of Facebook fans likewise increased 13% in 2016. Also encouraging, the rate of Emergency Department discharges due to non-fatal self-harm decreased 2.6% between 2014 and 2015 (most recent data available). Although the number of participants attending gatekeeper training presentations overall declined 29% from 2015 to 2016, this may reflect a more sustainable enrollment given the record numbers of participants in previous years.

In alignment with the County’s Live Well San Diego, the SPC Report to the Community addresses the 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 healthy, safe and thriving communities in San Diego County. To learn more about Live Well San Diego, visit www.livewellsd.org.
Know the Factors: Risk for + Protective against

Many factors play a critical role in suicide prevention. For clinicians, identifying risk and protective factors provides key information to assess and manage suicide risk in individuals. For communities and prevention programs, identifying risk and protective factors provides direction about what elements to change or promote.

Risk factors are characteristics that make it more likely that individuals will consider, attempt, or die by suicide. Protective factors are characteristics that make it less likely that individuals will consider, attempt, or die by suicide. Risk and protective factors are not the same thing as warning signs and are often confused.

Warning signs indicate an immediate risk of suicide, whereas risk factors indicate someone is at heightened risk for suicide, but do not necessarily indicate immediate risk. Warning signs are only applicable to individuals, whereas risk and protective factors are found in both individuals and communities. (Suicide Prevention Resource Center, & Rodgers, P., 2011)

The Power of Words

When it comes to suicide prevention, the terms, phrases and words we use can have a significant impact on the way messages are received. Messages can encourage someone to seek help and reach out, or they can push people farther from the support they need. Research has demonstrated that suicides decrease in the presence of safe messaging, and can even increase in the presence of unsafe messaging. The suicide prevention community is trying to clarify the ways we all refer to actions related to suicide to better support help-seeking behavior among those that are at risk.

For example, the most common term we use to describe someone ending their own life is that the individual “committed suicide”. Consider this, what first comes to mind when you hear the word commit? Crime? Sin? Those are the words that people typically think of when asked. Just the use of the word “commit” can carry an enormous amount of stigma and shame, preventing people from reaching out for the support they need. Instead, it is recommended to use “died by suicide”. This phrase can’t be distorted, and simply states the fact without placing shame or guilt on the individual or survivors of suicide loss. Another phrase to consider is the “successful” versus “unsuccessful” to describe suicide attempts. There is no success or failure when it comes to suicide. These events should simply be referred to as a suicide death or a suicide attempt.

Please assist us in changing the conversations about suicide, and help us raise the bar for the conversations about suicide prevention. Each of us can play a part in promoting a more supportive environment, and it begins with the words we use. Those bereaved by suicide and those who have been suicidal themselves have commented on the negative and unhelpful effects of stigmatizing language (Alberta Mental Health Board; Sommer-Rotenberg, 1998; Maple et al., 2010). The following comment was posted in response to a resource on suicide and language provided by the Canadian Centre for Suicide Prevention; “I have always believed language is very powerful, no matter the subject. As a person who has had a number of suicide attempts, I believe the continuing stigma surrounding suicide will make it very difficult to change the language. Consider successful suicide and failed suicide attempts, terms used regularly in ER’s and Mental Health Units. The successful suicide means you’re dead. Would anyone consider referring to any other way in which a person died as ‘successful?’” (Susan Beaton MAPS, 2013)

Words To Consider...

**RECOMMENDED**

- Died by suicide
- Took their own life
- Suicided
- Ended their life
- Non-fatal attempt at suicide
- Attempted to end their life

**NOT RECOMMENDED**

**Committed suicide**
Note: Use of the word commit implies a negative act such as crime/sin

**Completed suicide**
Note: This associates suicide with success

**Successful/failed attempt or unsuccessful**
Note: There is no success, or lack of success, when dealing with suicide
Status of Suicide & Suicide Prevention in San Diego County: 2017 Report Card

What do the data reveal about suicide? What is being done about it?

This Report Card brings together the most recent data from multiple sources (for the years 2012 through 2016) to present a profile of suicide in San Diego County. Information from the County Medical Examiner, the Access & Crisis Line, hospital emergency departments, student self-reports, suicide prevention awareness campaigns and gatekeeper training programs are presented to provide a more complete understanding of the status of suicide and efforts to prevent it in San Diego County.

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Total Suicide Deaths</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Number</td>
<td>413</td>
<td>441</td>
<td>420</td>
<td>427</td>
<td>431</td>
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<tr>
<td>b. Rate per 100,000 population</td>
<td>13.2</td>
<td>14.0</td>
<td>13.2</td>
<td>13.2</td>
<td>13.1</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Emergency Department Discharges: Self-Inflicted Injury/Poisoning</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>a. Number</td>
<td>2,788</td>
<td>2,870</td>
<td>3,263</td>
<td>3,248</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Rate per 100,000 population</td>
<td>89.1</td>
<td>91.1</td>
<td>102.2</td>
<td>99.5</td>
<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Access &amp; Crisis Line: Percent of Crisis Calls</td>
<td>25.0</td>
<td>19.7</td>
<td>22.4</td>
<td>25.8</td>
<td>25.7</td>
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<td>4. It’s Up to Us Media Campaign</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>a. Annual Website Visits</td>
<td>66,594</td>
<td>98,960</td>
<td>134,574</td>
<td>210,663</td>
<td>246,273</td>
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<td>b. Total Facebook Fans</td>
<td>7,689</td>
<td>10,186</td>
<td>13,211</td>
<td>14,239</td>
<td>16,074</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Student Self-Report: Seriously Considered Suicide</td>
<td>20.0%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>17.5%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>14.5%</td>
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<td>6. Suicide Prevention Gatekeeper Trainings</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>a. Presentations</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>100</td>
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<tr>
<td>b. Participants</td>
<td>3,596</td>
<td>5,112</td>
<td>6,390</td>
<td>2,747</td>
<td>1,937</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. Total number and rate of persons that died by suicide. Source: County of San Diego HHSA, Emergency Medical Services, Medical Examiner Database, 2012-2016. Population Data from SANDAG. 2. Total number, rates of persons discharged from emergency department that had self-inflicted harm from 2012-2015. Source: County of San Diego HHSA, Emergency Medical Services, Medical Examiner Database, 2012-2015. Population Data from SANDAG. 3. Total percentage of self-reported crisis calls to the San Diego County Access & Crisis Line from 2012-2016. Source: OptumHealth. 4. Total number of persons that visited the It’s Up to Us media campaign website and cumulative number of fans of the Facebook campaign website page per year from 2012-2016. Source: Civilian Agency. 5. Total percent of youth (9th and 11th Grade) that had suicide ideation (surveys conducted every other year from 2012-2016). Source: California Healthy Kids Survey (CHKS), Developed by WestEd for the California Department of Education, 2012-2016. The total percent is an average of the 9th and 11th grade percentages. 6. Total number of Gatekeeper suicide prevention trainings [Question, Persuade, and Refer (QPR), ASIST, GLSEN, First Responders, Pharmacists] overall held and participants trained as tracked by San Diego County Suicide Prevention Council. Source: Community Health Improvement Partners, 2012-2016.

Call the San Diego Access & 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.
Let’s Talk About It

Suicide, to most, is a scary thought, but talking about it openly and directly doesn’t have to be. We too often fear that we’ll say the wrong thing, and instead opt not to have a conversation that could save a life. To help each of us feel empowered to #BeThe1To, it is vital that we all know what questions to ask and how:

- Are you thinking about suicide?
  - Be direct, and let the person know you are comfortable talking about suicide. There is nothing to be ashamed of, and let them know you want them to choose life.
- Do you have a plan?
  - Finding out if someone has thought about how they would attempt suicide can let you know how close to an attempt they may be. Also, having this information can help you remove lethal means from the area.
- Ask about the pain
  - Suicide often isn’t about wanting to die, it’s about not wanting to live. By trying to understand someone’s pain, we can help offer hope by reducing the pain and reminding them of their reasons to live.

Did You Know?

The day after Robin Williams’ suicide, the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline fielded the greatest number of calls in its history, and 70% of people who came to their website were new visitors. Seeking help for a mental health problem is not easy. Individuals who are struggling with thoughts of suicide or other mental health issues may face any number of barriers. However, individuals with mental health problems can get better, and many recover completely. Take the step and seek help for yourself or someone else in need.

San Diego Access & Crisis Hotline: Not Just Here During a Crisis

How it works, the San Diego Access & Crisis Line (ACL) is available not only for someone in crisis, is also there for those that need to talk to someone that can listen and provide assistance. The ACL is available 7/24 for FREE, confidential help in any language.

Individuals in the San Diego County area who are experiencing a behavioral health crisis, are in need of behavioral health referrals for themselves or someone else, or just need to talk to someone who can help may call the ACL and will be telephonically connected to one of our highly skilled, licensed or Master’s level clinicians who will assist them with the help they need.

The San Diego ACL is a statewide toll-free number, (888) 724-7240 & 711 (TTY), operated by a sophisticated clinical team that has earned the highest evaluations by the leading national program evaluators, the American Association of Suicidology and CONTACT USA, for online emotional support CHAT.

CHAT services available (Mon- Fri 4pm-10pm).

https://svcrplv.uhc.com/sdchat/
The San Diego County Suicide Prevention Council (SPC)

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 interagency 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 SPAP or to join SPC, visit [www.spcsandiego.org](http://www.spcsandiego.org)

**What You Can Do:**

- Call the Access & Crisis Line if you or someone you know needs help at 888-724-7240 (7 days a week/24 hrs a day and multiple languages available).
- Volunteer your time and/or donate to a suicide prevention organization.
- Learn more about SPC at [http://www.spcsandiego.org](http://www.spcsandiego.org) and/or join our mailing list by emailing info@sdchip.org subject: SPC Mailing List.
- Call 2-1-1, a resource and information hub for community, health and disaster services.
- Learn the signs and what to do next by hosting or attending a QPR Suicide Prevention Gatekeeper training, go to [http://www.spcsandiego.org](http://www.spcsandiego.org) to find a training.
- Take a Mental Health First Aid training [www.mhasd.org](http://www.mhasd.org).
- Visit the It’s Up to Us website [www.up2sd.org](http://www.up2sd.org); become a Facebook Fan [www.facebook.com/up2sd](http://www.facebook.com/up2sd).
- Attend a suicide prevention awareness walk.
- Share this information and talk to your family and friends about suicide and mental health. You can help us eliminate the stigma!
- Check-out [www.livewellsd.org](http://www.livewellsd.org) to see how you can join the Live Well San Diego efforts in your region.

**Suicide Prevention Milestones Timeline**

- County HHS places Suicide/Homicide Adult Committee (1994)
- CHIP Violence & Injury Prevention Work Team started (1999)
- County of San Diego HHS awards CHIP contract to create a countywide Suicide Prevention Action Plan (2010)
- It’s Up to Us Media Campaign started (2010)
- Gatekeeper Trainings begin in San Diego County (2011)
- Suicide Prevention Council is formed and begins implementing the action plan (2011)
- County of San Diego HHS awards CHIP second contract to update the action plan (SPAP) (2016)
- Proposition 63, Mental Health Services Act passed (2004)
- Affordable Care Act enacted (2010)
- National Strategy for Suicide Prevention published (2001)
- California Strategic Plan on Suicide Prevention published (2008)
Local Resources

Warning Signs for Suicide
Warning signs are early, detectable signs that indicate increased risk for suicide.

Call 9-1-1 or seek immediate help from a mental health provider when you hear or see any one of these behaviors:

♦ Someone threatening to hurt or kill themselves
♦ Someone looking for ways to kill themselves; seeking access to pills, weapons, or other means
♦ Someone talking or writing about death, dying, or suicide

If you are concerned about someone because their behavior has changed and they are exhibiting any of the warning signs of suicide listed below, call the Access & Crisis Line at (888) 724-7240.

♦ Hopelessness
♦ Rage, anger, seeking revenge
♦ Acting reckless or engaging in risky activities
♦ Feeling trapped—like there’s no way out
♦ Increasing their use of alcohol or drugs
♦ Withdrawing from family, friends, and society
♦ Anxiety, agitation, unable to sleep, or sleeping all the time
♦ Dramatic mood changes
♦ Feelings of having no reason for living or no sense of purpose in life

Access & Crisis Line
(888) 724-7240

If you need information for you or a loved one about how to handle a mental health crisis, you can talk to a trained professional to help with your specific situation. The Access & Crisis Line is confidential and available 24/7 in all languages. TDD is available for the hearing impaired at (619) 641-6992.

It’s Up to Us

www.Up2SD.org

The It’s Up to Us campaign is designed to empower San Diegans to talk openly about mental illness, recognize symptoms, utilize local resources, and seek help. For local suicide prevention resources, click on “Suicide Prevention” under the “Find Help” tab.

2-1-1

Dial “2-1-1” or visit 211sandiego.org

Serving all of San Diego County, including veterans and active military, 2-1-1 connects people with a variety of community, health, and disaster services, through a free, 24/7 stigma-free phone service.

Mental Health First Aid

www.mhasd.org

Mental Health First Aid is a FREE 8 hour certification course designed to give participants the tools to respond to psychiatric emergencies until professional help arrives and to improve peoples mental health literacy.

To schedule your own QPR Gatekeeper Training, contact Lora Cayanan at 858-609-7971 or lcayanan@sdchip.org:
www.spcsandiego.org