

Howard County Youth Suicide Prevention Plan

Overview of Need

Suicide is a significant public health issue. While suicide is a problem across the lifespan, national suicide rates among teens and young adults have nearly tripled since the 1940's.¹ In Howard County, suicide was the leading cause of death for youth ages 15-19 between 2014-2016.² Despite existing efforts for the prevention of youth suicide in Howard County, local suicide rates continue to increase. Following a mandated review of child fatalities in the county, Howard County Health Department (HCHD) became increasingly concerned by a rise in youth suicide fatalities over a five-year period. Although death by suicide is a complex issue, it is preventable. In response to the locally increasing trend of youth suicide rates, research was conducted to develop a plan to decrease suicide deaths among youth in Howard County.

Progress and Accomplishments

1. A multi-phased Youth Suicide Prevention Plan (YSPP) has been developed. The long-term strategic plan incorporates evidence-based strategies, an awareness campaign, and community-based collaboration, coordination, and intervention in preventing suicide.
2. The Plan consists of five intervention pillars with corresponding strategies and activities that are approaches to preventing youth suicide:
 - Increase Awareness and Reduce Stigma
 - Prevention
 - Early Identification and Intervention
 - Referral to treatment
 - Postvention
3. A social marketing awareness campaign has been developed which includes social/digital media, print material, and community presentations and trainings.
4. A project work plan and evaluation structure has been developed to monitor progress.
5. A Youth Suicide Prevention Coordinator has been recruited to oversee the long-term project and activities within the plan.
6. Advisory groups consisting of community stakeholders, community members, agency professionals, and youth will help oversee the implementation of the plan.

Supporting Data and Plans³

HIGH SCHOOL



MIDDLE SCHOOL



1 in 4 high school students experienced sad or hopeless feelings.



Challenges

- Addressing the diversity of Howard County, acknowledging various cultures, languages, races/ethnicities, religions, socioeconomic statuses, sexual orientations, and gender identities.
- Negative stigma about mental illness.
- Racial and gender disparities in suicide rates.
- Sexual minority youth disparities in suicide rates.
- Risk factors that influence youth suicide.

¹ Maryland Department of Health. Maryland Vital Statistics Annual Reports: 2008-2017

² Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2018). Deaths, percent of total deaths, and death rates for the 15 leading causes of death in 5-year age groups, by race and Hispanic origin, and sex: United States, 2016. Retrieved from https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/dvs/lcwk/lcwk1_hr_2016.pdf

³ Maryland Vital Statistics Administration, 2016 Maryland Youth Risk Behavior Survey, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention