



Task Force Highlights Prevention Efforts as Suicide Rates Increase

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Task Force Highlights Prevention Efforts as Suicide Rates Increase

Pontiac, Mich., June 14, 2018 — The Oakland County Youth Suicide Prevention Task Force encourages residents to utilize local suicide prevention resources in the wake of [new data](#) released by the Centers of Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

Suicide rates increased in nearly every state from 1999 through 2016, and nearly 45,000 suicides occurred in 2016 making it the 10th-leading cause of death in the United States. Among people ages 15 to 34, suicide is the second-leading cause of death. Michigan experienced over a 31% increase in suicides since 1999.

“We know that suicide is a concern in Oakland County,” said Leigh-Anne Stafford, health officer for Oakland County Health Division. “Ensuring that our youth and families are aware of community resources before a need arises is a vital step in preventing suicide attempts and deaths.”

The Task Force, established in 2011 to coordinate suicide prevention efforts in Oakland County, has created many resources to bring awareness to the topic and provide guidance on supporting a loved one in need. Key resources include:

- [Suicide Prevention Toolkit for Parents](#)

- [Suicide Prevention Toolkit for Schools](#)
- [Suicide Warning Signs Flyer](#)
- [“Make Your Home Suicide-Safe” Brochure](#)

In addition to resources, local suicide prevention trainings are offered regularly and funded by grants awarded to the Health Division, Oakland Community Health Network, Oakland Schools, and Jewish Family Service of Metro Detroit. Over 2,000 people have received training within the last 3 years. Resources and training information can be found at www.oakgov.com/suicideprevention.

“We encourage families and friends to have open and honest conversations about suicide and mental health,” said Diana Bundschuh, Interim CEO of Oakland Community Health Network. “The more we talk about suicide, the more we can break down barriers and promote help-seeking behaviors. Help is available.”

Recent Task Force efforts focus on a more upstream approach to suicide prevention. Over 90 community members and professionals attended a May 24th Community Discussion that highlighted prevention strategies to use before an individual develops thoughts of suicide. Over 300 people streamed the event live on Oakland Community Health Network’s Facebook page. Jodi Spicer, Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and Youth Suicide Prevention Consultant from the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services, was the keynote speaker. Spicer discussed strategies to prevent ACEs such as neglect and abuse, and promote resiliency among youth, families, and throughout the community. Upstream approaches used by families, schools, juvenile justice, and behavioral health were also highlighted. Find documents from the community discussion, including Spicer’s ACEs slides, at <https://bit.ly/2sFu8Fo>.

Healthcare and behavioral health organizations are also adopting specific strategies and tools known as the Zero Suicide approach to improve the care and safety of individuals at risk for suicide. Many Task Force partner organizations have begun using the comprehensive approach developed by the Suicide Prevention Resource Center and the National Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention. To learn more about Zero Suicide, visit zerosuicide.sprc.org.

For more information about youth suicide prevention, visit www.oakgov.com/suicideprevention. For up-to-date public health information, visit www.oakgov.com/health or find Public Health Oakland on Facebook, Twitter, and Pinterest @publichealthOC.

About the Oakland County Youth Suicide Prevention Task Force

Oakland County Youth Suicide Prevention Task Force was created in 2011 to coordinate suicide prevention efforts in Oakland County. Partners include Affirmations, Alliance of Coalitions for Healthy Communities, Andrew Kukes Foundation for Social Anxiety, Beaumont Health, Common Ground, Community Network Services, Easterseals Michigan, Friendship Circle, Havenwyck Hospital, Jewish Family Service

of Metro Detroit, National Alliance of Mental Illness – Metro Detroit, New Oakland Family Centers, Oakland Community Health Network, Oakland County Health Division, Oakland County Youth Assistance, Oakland Family Services, Oakland Schools, Oakland University, St. Joseph Mercy Oakland, and Training & Treatment Innovations.

If you or someone you know may be thinking of suicide, going through a hard time, or just need to talk, call or text the Common Ground Resource and Crisis Helpline at 1-800-231-1127 or chat online 24 hours a day, 7 days a week at www.commongroundhelps.org.

For media inquiries only, contact Leigh-Anne Stafford, health officer for Oakland County Health Division, at 248-858-1410.

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