Suicide Awareness and Prevention

In Ohio, roughly 1,600 individuals die from suicide each year, and more than twice as many people die from suicide than homicide. While there is no single cause of suicide, there are things we can all do to reduce the risk. Sharing information and resources and raising awareness about the impact of suicide on communities is a vital part of suicide prevention efforts. Suicide impacts communities across racial, age, socioeconomic, and geographic sectors, and suicide prevention efforts require collaboration among all sectors of society. These efforts must be coordinated, as no single approach can impact an issue as complex as suicide.

Risk Factors and Warning Signs

Learning the risk factors and warning signs of suicide is an important step in suicide prevention and awareness; if we know why someone may be at risk for suicidal thoughts and can recognize the warning signs that someone is contemplating suicide, we can better help that individual.

Risk factors are characteristics or conditions that increase the chance that a person may attempt suicide. These include:

- Mental health conditions
- Physical illness
- Previous suicide attempts
- Family history of suicide
- History of mental illness and/or addiction
- Loss (relational, work, financial, or social)
- Barriers to accessing mental health treatment (including stigma)
- Exposure to recent suicide

Most individuals who attempt suicide show one or more warning signs and can exhibit a significant change in behavior. Warning signs can be broken down into three main categories, and include:

**Talk** – an individual considering suicide may talk about: being a burden to others; expressing hopelessness; talking or posting on social media about wanting to die; having no reason to live; feeling trapped; being in unbearable pain; killing themselves.

**Act** – a change in behavior, or the presence of completely new behaviors, is an important warning sign, especially if these changes are related to a painful event. Some warning behaviors are: isolating themselves; increased substance use; looking for a way to access lethal means; increased anger or rage; extreme mood swings; sleeping too little or too much; making plans for suicide.

**Feel** – individuals considering suicide often display one or more of the following moods: increased anxiety; loss of interest; depression; rage; irritability.
Suicide Facts, Figures, and Resources

Definitions

- **Suicide** is a death caused by self-directed injuries with an intent to die as a result of the behavior. A person dies by suicide.

- **Suicide Attempt** is a non-fatal, self-directed, potentially injurious behavior with an intent to die as a result of the behavior; might not result in injury.

- **Suicide Ideation** is thinking about, considering, or planning suicide. Might not result in injury.

There is no one cause of suicide.

Many factors contribute, including mental illness and stressors that overwhelm an individual's ability to cope.

Suicide in Ohio

- More than twice as many people die by suicide than homicide
- From 1999-2016, Ohio's suicide rate increased 36%
- 187 youth die by suicide every year in Ohio
- 56.9% of men who die by suicide use firearms as the primary method
- Suicide is the 2nd leading cause of death in youth and young adults in Ohio
- Men die by suicide 3.5 times more often than women
- In 2015, there were over 1,600 suicide deaths
- 1 person dies by suicide every 5 hours

Five Steps to Help Someone Who is At-Risk

These evidence-based action steps from the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline's #BeThe1To Campaign can help you communicate with someone who may be suicidal.

1. **Ask** – directly asking someone if they are thinking about suicide shows that you're open to speaking about suicide in a non-judgmental way. Never promise to keep their thoughts of suicide a secret, and make sure you take their answers seriously. Studies show that asking at-risk individuals if they are suicidal does not increase suicides or suicidal thoughts.

2. **Keep Them Safe** – if the individual indicates that they are thinking about suicide, it's important to find out if they've already attempted to harm themselves, if they have a specific and detailed plan, and if they have their method planned. Knowing the answers to these questions will help you establish immediate safety.

3. **Be There** – be present and show support for the person at risk. Find out what and who they believe will be the most effective source of help for them, and don't commit to anything you're not willing or able to accomplish.

4. **Help Them Connect** – explore possible supports with them like seeing a mental health professional, developing a safety plan, or using Crisis Text Line or the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline.

5. **Follow Up** – stay in contact with the individual. They've confided in and trusted you, so make sure you follow-up with them to show your ongoing support.

If you or someone you know is in crisis, contact:

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: Call 1800-273-8255 for free and confidential support 24/7
Crisis Text Line: Text 4HOPE to the number 741 741 for free, confidential, 24/7 support via text

Sources:
1. Ohio Department of Health Violence and Injury Prevention Program
2. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
3. American Foundation for Suicide Prevention
4. Ohio Suicide Prevention Foundation
5. American Association of Suicidology
6. National Suicide Prevention Lifeline