

KNOWING THE FACTS ABOUT SUICIDE

FACT – Every two hours and eleven minutes a person under the age of twenty-five commits suicide.

FACT – According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) suicide is the third leading cause of death among youth between the ages of nine and nineteen.

FACT – Colorado ranks seventh among the states for the percentage of deaths for all ages caused by suicide:

1. Montana
2. Alaska
3. Wyoming
4. New Mexico
5. Utah
6. Nevada
- 7. Colorado**

WHAT IS SUICIDE?

The definition of suicide is the intentional taking of one's own life. Prior to the late nineteenth century, suicide was legally defined as a criminal act in most Western countries. In the social climate of the 2000s, however, suicidal behavior changed and now is most commonly regarded and responded to as a psychiatric emergency.

WHAT ARE THE LEADING CAUSES OF SUICIDE?

- Hopelessness – feeling like things are bad and won't get any better.
- Fear of losing control, going crazy, harming oneself or others.
- Helplessness – a belief that there's nothing that can make life better.
- Worthlessness – feeling useless and of no value.
- Self-hate, guilt, or shame.
- Extreme sadness or loneliness.
- Anxiety or worry.

WHAT ARE THE TOP FIVE METHODS OF SUICIDE?

According to Colorado Coroner's Reports:

5. Asphyxiation – such as: helium, carbon monoxide, hydrogen sulfide (similar to cyanide), and ethylene glycol (active ingredient in antifreeze)

4. Jumping (ligature)
3. Overdose – prescription medication usually found in the home or narcotics
2. Hanging
1. Firearms – The risk of suicide increases dramatically when kids and teens have access to firearms at home. Nearly 60% of all suicides in the US are committed with a gun. That's why any gun in your home should be unloaded, locked with a locking device, secured in a safe place, and kept out of the reach of children, teens, or at risk youth, (similar to cyanide), and ethylene glycol (active ingredient in antifreeze). The use of a gun to commit suicide is done predominantly by males.

WHAT ARE THE HIGHEST SUICIDE RISK POPULATIONS AND COMMUNITIES IN COLORADO?

- **LGBTQ Youth** – Some LGBTQ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Questioning) youth are more likely to experience difficulties in their lives due to the lack of parental support, and increased risk of bullying, teasing, harassment, physical assault.

LGBTQ youth suicide rates are more than alarming. Although LGBTQ youth make up only 10% of the population, they account for 30% of youth suicides.

- **Hispanic / Latino Youth** – While the majority of risk factors apply to all ethnic groups, there are additional risk factors in the Hispanic community.
 - Generational differences
 - Family responsibilities
 - Cultural beliefs and customs
 - Added stress for recent immigrants
 - Lack of jobs
 - Reduced access to medical help and professional mental health assistance

Suicide is the 3rd leading cause of death for Hispanic males ages 15-34 and suicide attempts are the leading cause of death by Hispanic females.

SUICIDE TOUCHES ALL

Suicide touches every aspect of our society - rich/poor, city/rural, race/creed, religious affiliation/political party, athlete/academic- and leaves family, friends, classmates, teachers, coaches, colleagues, and community members devastated and wondering if they could have done something to prevent a person from turning to suicide.

WARNING SIGNS

Warning signs of suicide are not always obvious and they may vary from person to person. Some make their intentions clear, while others keep thoughts and feelings secret. A partial list of warning signs are:

- A severe drop in school or work performance.
- Having trouble concentrating or thinking clearly.
- Change in personality / less concerned about appearance.
- Having mood swings.
- Wanting to be left alone.
- Withdrawal from social contact (family and friends).
- Losing interest in things once cared about.
- Writing songs, poems, letters about death, separation, and loss.
- Talking about suicide and/or making suicide statements.
- Talking about being a burden to others.
- Preoccupied with death, dying, or violence.
- Saying good bye and/or giving away personal possessions.
- Feeling hopeless, helpless, worthless, overwhelming sadness, depressed.

While all of these signs are not necessarily indications of suicidal thoughts and feelings when taken separately - a pattern can exhibit a serious problem. Make sure you take note of how often the signs appear.

MENTAL ILLNESS AND SUICIDE

Mental Health - is defined as “a state of well-being in which the individual realizes his/her own abilities, can cope with normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his/her community.”

Mental Illness - is defined as “collectively all diagnosable mental disorders,” or “health conditions that are characterized by alterations in the thinking, mood, or behavior associated with distress and/or impaired functioning.”

(Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)

Suicidal thoughts and behaviors are a mental illness or psychiatric emergency requiring immediate intervention to prevent this disastrous event.

Some of the mental illnesses most commonly associated with suicide include:

- Depression – the most common type of mental illness.
- Psychosis – being distressed and confused as a result of hallucinations and wanting to get away from the symptoms.
- Drugs and Alcohol – misuse of marijuana, heroin, amphetamines, and alcohol.

A SUICIDE ATTEMPT

An early warning sign that a person is developing a mental illness is one who attempting suicide. If this is the case it is important to seek assessment and treatment. As suicidal thoughts or behaviors are a psychiatric emergency, the involvement of properly trained

mental health professionals is necessary. With appropriate intervention, such as medical treatment, counseling, social support, in time, if a person has attempted suicide, a doctor or mental health professional can provide treatment, education, and support.

WHAT TO DO IF YOU SUSPECT

If you think a friend, a relative, or your child is at risk of suicide, discuss your concerns openly and non-judgmentally with them. Also discuss your concerns with your doctor, teachers, counselors, social workers, spiritual advisor and get help immediately.

If you learn that your child is thinking about suicide, your doctor can refer you to a psychologist, psychiatrist, or your local hospital's department of psychiatry can provide a list of doctors in your area.

If someone you know is at serious risk of suicide, keep the phone number of a crisis service handy in case you need urgent help.

- **Colorado Crisis Services (1-844-493-8255)**
- **National Suicide Prevention (1-800-273-8255)**
- **911 for emergency services**
- **Your Primary Care Physician**
- **Safe2Tell (to make an anonymous report)
(1-877-542-7233)**
- **Text Crisis (741-741)**