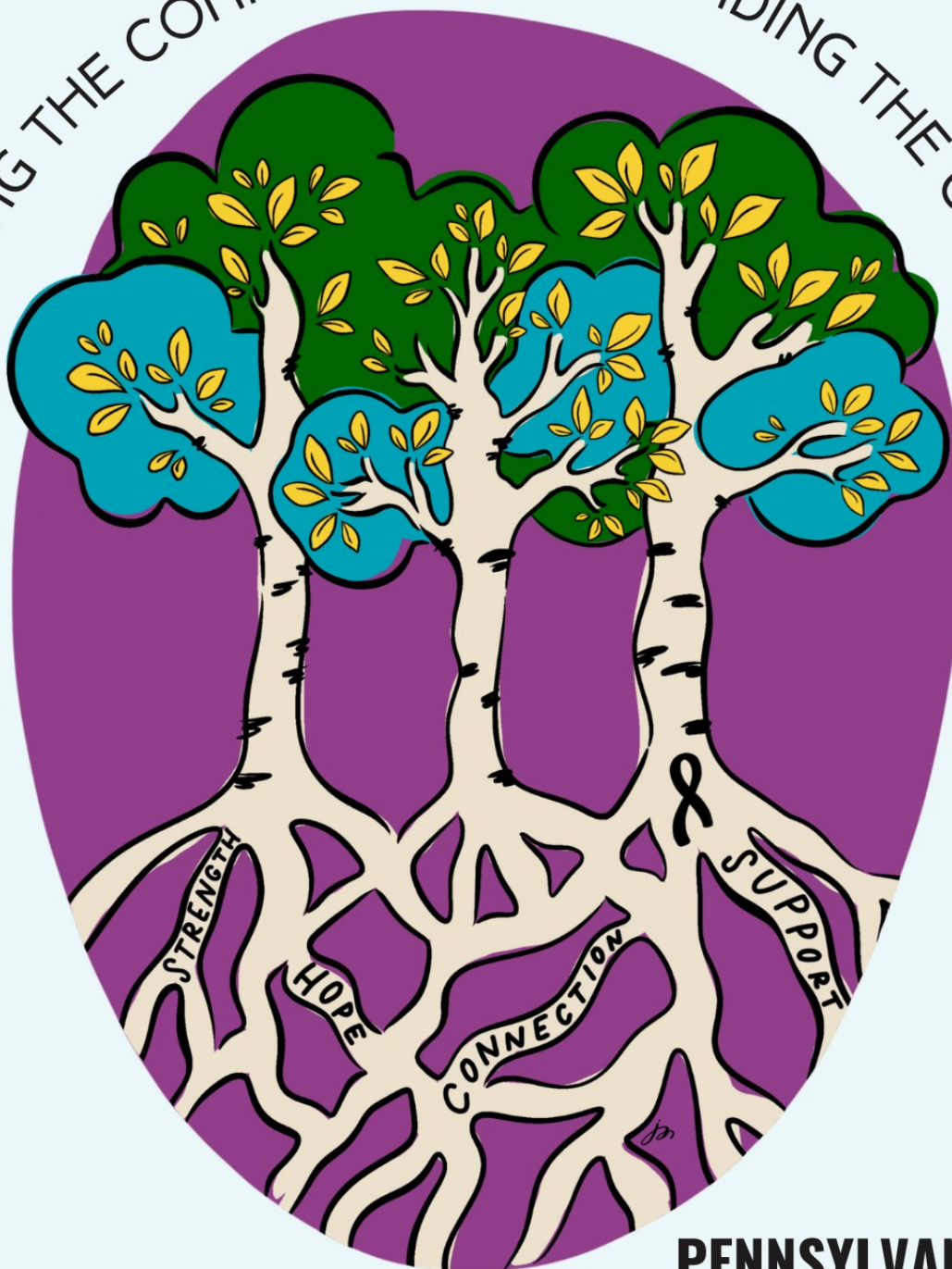


STRENGTHENING THE CONNECTION * EXPANDING THE CONVERSATION



PENNSYLVANIA'S SUICIDE PREVENTION MONTH GUIDE

SEPTEMBER 2026

Strengthening the Connection, Expanding the Conversation

Who else do you trust that we could talk to together?

What's one thing I can do to support you this week?

Please don't carry this by yourself. What do you need most right now?

Can we check in again tomorrow?

This September, Suicide Prevention Awareness Month, National Suicide Prevention Week (September 6th-12th), and World Suicide Prevention Day (September 10th) mark the final year of our national three-year theme of 'Changing the Narrative on Suicide.' This theme has helped emphasize the importance of caring and supportive conversations with individuals, and on communicating openly about suicide prevention within our communities. In recognition that suicide prevention requires a multifaceted approach, this year provides the opportunity to expand these conversations and strengthen connections at all levels of our work here in Pennsylvania.

Both research and lived experience tell us that connection is one of the most powerful suicide prevention strategies and can make all the difference in a person's life. Connection is for everyone. It brings joy, opportunity, and shared experience that gives life meaning and contributes to our well-being. It gives us a sense of security when we have trusting relationships with people we can go to for support when needed. It is a means of caring for those experiencing a crisis, and making sure we check back once the crisis has passed.

Connection has also helped us strengthen our state's suicide prevention infrastructure. Pennsylvania's Suicide Prevention Task Force, which includes more than 13 state agencies and Governor's affinity commissions, will be releasing a new statewide plan this September. This plan will highlight various initiatives in place across state agencies, as well as a commitment to work together on shared goals. State agencies and organizations have also partnered closely with counties and community organizations across the Commonwealth to unify and align efforts in meaningful ways. This has helped suicide prevention stay a priority.

Our collective work is having an impact. From 2023 to 2024, there was a decrease in our statewide suicide rate. This work has included community conversations and campaigns that raise awareness of suicide and key resources like the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline. It has also included the provision of culturally relevant training within diverse settings. There has been increased efforts to identify those at risk of suicide and respond in trauma-informed ways, as well as expanded community-based response efforts and resources for suicide loss. Beyond numbers, the impact of these strategies is felt every day in moments of true connection between those involved in this work and those who are touched by it.

We hope this guide is useful throughout the year to support your community's ongoing suicide prevention efforts. You may adapt the contents as needed. There are also several standalone one-pagers for dissemination in your communities. By working together, we will continue to strengthen our efforts and expand our approach to suicide prevention in the Commonwealth!

Brief Statistics: Why Suicide Prevention Matters

We all want to live in healthy, happy communities that thrive in all aspects of wellness. Data such as the image below helps us demonstrate the severity of the problem of suicide and the lasting impact it has on a community. The data doesn't just represent a number, but someone's mother or father, brother or sister, neighbor, or loved one who has, for one reason or another, temporarily lost hope. When we promote resources like our hotlines and crisis centers, we frequently see increases in the number of people who reach out for help rather than struggling alone.

Suicide Data: Pennsylvania

This fact sheet reports data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) unless noted otherwise (see footnote). This is the most current verified data at time of creation (July 2026).

In 2024, suicide was the

Leading cause
of death for ages 10-14

2nd leading cause
of death for ages 15-24

2nd leading cause
of death for ages 25-34

4th leading cause
of death for ages 35-44

4th leading cause
of death for ages 45-54

8th leading cause
of death for ages 55-64

The data above were obtained from the CDC's WISQARS
Leading Causes of Death Visualization Tool

7th

Leading cause
of death in PA

13.28

deaths per 100,000
people, ranking PA
40th in suicide
mortality¹

Populations at increased risk of suicide:

While anyone can experience suicidal ideation, some groups have increased risk factors. Below is a non-exhaustive list of some of these groups:

Veterans:

In 2023, the national veteran suicide rate was 35.2 per 100,000, almost double the rate of non-veteran U.S. adults.²

Black, Indigenous, and People Of Color (BIPOC):

People of American Indian or Alaska Native descent had a 26% increase in suicide rate between 2018 and 2021. Black individuals saw a 19% increase and the suicide rate among Hispanic persons increased by nearly 7%.³

Older adults:

Between 2001 and 2021, suicide rates significantly increased for men ages 55-74 and women 55-84.⁴

People with disabilities:

A 2021 study found that they were significantly more likely to report suicidal ideation than people without disabilities.⁵

Black adolescents:

Suicide rates among Black youth ages 10-24 increased by 36.6% from 2018 to 2021.

LGBTQ youth:

39% of LGBTQ youth considered suicide in 2024, and this was higher for transgender and nonbinary youth. LGBTQ youth of color reported higher rates than their white peers.⁷

Additional Helpful Data Sources:

- [Center for Disease Control \(CDC\)](https://www.cdc.gov/)
- [Pennsylvania Youth Survey \(PAYS\)](https://www.paysurvey.org/)
- [Pennsylvania Department of Health's Enterprise Data Dissemination Information Exchange \(EDDIE\)](https://www.penn.gov/health/enterprise-data-dissemination-information-exchange-eddie/)
- [Suicide Prevention Resource Center: Suicide in the U.S.](https://www.sprc.org/suicide-in-the-u-s/)
- [The Trevor Project Survey on the Mental Health of LGBTQ+ Young People \(2025\)](https://www.thetrevorproject.org/survey-2024/)
- [National Veteran Suicide Prevention Annual Report \(2025\)](https://www.veteranscrisisline.net/annual-report/)

Download the Pennsylvania Suicide Data Graphic [Here](#):



Additional sources:

1. <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/pressroom/sosmap/suicide-mortality/suicide.htm>
2. <https://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/docs/data-sheets/2020/2020-State-Data-Sheet-Pennsylvania-508.pdf>
3. <https://www.usnews.com/news/health-news/articles/2023-02-09/suicide-rates-have-risen-among-people-of-color>
4. <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/products/databriefs/db483.htm>
5. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/34465506/>
6. https://watsoncoleman.house.gov/imo/media/doc/full_taskforce_report.pdf
7. <https://www.thetrevorproject.org/survey-2024/>

WORDS MATTER:

The Language of Suicide

It can feel uncomfortable, and sometimes even scary, to talk about mental health and suicide prevention, even though many people have been touched by suicide in some way. The term suicide centered lived experience refers to anyone who has had or is currently experiencing thoughts of suicide, survived one or more suicide attempts, lost a loved one to suicide, or provided substantial support to a person with experience of suicide (Roses in the Ocean, 2023). By finding the courage within ourselves to engage in open discussions, we can help save lives. Here are some tips that may help when engaging in courageous conversations.

SAY THIS...	WHY?
Died by suicide death by suicide lost their life to suicide	Compassionate, nonjudgmental language helps reduce stigma and acknowledges suicide as a complex health issue—not a crime or moral failing.
Survived a suicide attempt fatal suicide attempt non-fatal suicide attempt	Clear, nonjudgmental language respects the person's experience and avoids stigmatizing or misleading terms like "failed" or "successful" attempt.
[Name] is facing suicide [Name] is thinking of suicide [Name] has experienced suicidal thoughts	Respectful, person-centered language acknowledges their experience without defining them by it or using stigmatizing labels.
[Name] lives with schizophrenia People with mental illness [Name] has a substance use disorder	Person-first language shows respect for the individual, reinforcing the fact that their condition does not define them.

Additional Resources

- [Safe and Effective Messaging for Suicide Prevention](#): Evidence-based recommendations from the Suicide Prevention Resource Center (SPRC).
- [Best Practices and Recommendations for Reporting on Suicide](#): This page provides a variety of helpful safe messaging resources by Suicide Awareness Voices of Education (SAVE) and partners.
- [Framework for Successful Messaging](#): Created by the National Action Alliance
- [Mental Health Media Guide](#): Created by mental health experts and entertainment leaders to help storytellers portray mental health more accurately and authentically.

Always provide information for assistance, such as the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline. You can order free wallet cards and magnets from the [SAMHSA store](#).

Suicide Prevention Awareness: Sample Action Steps



- Use a [virtual background](#) or [download social media graphics](#) to help raise awareness.
- Host an educational training such as [Question, Persuade, Refer \(QPR\) Suicide Prevention for Gatekeepers Course](#), [Mental Health First Aid \(MHFA\)](#), [AFSP's Talk Saves Lives](#), or [Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training \(ASIST\)](#).
- Listen to a podcast about promoting wellness and resilience or about preventing suicide. New podcasts for youth, family members, educators, and other caring adults are available from [Jana Marie Foundation](#) and [Aevidum](#).
- Post signs with positive messages around your school, workplace, or town. Be sure to include the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline (988), Crisis Text Line (Text PA to 741741), or The Trevor Project (1-866-488-7386).
- Take action to share the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline on 9/8, recognized as 988 Day. SAMHSA offers a variety of ideas [here](#).
- Light a candle on September 10th to remember a loved one or to remind yourself that you matter.
- Work with your county commissioners to proclaim September as Suicide Prevention Month (see example at the end of packet).
- Attend "Suicide Prevention Awareness Day at the Capitol" in Harrisburg on Tuesday, September 1st from 9am—12pm in the Capitol Rotunda.
- Share posters and videos from the [Prevent Suicide PA Annual PSA Contest](#) for high school students to help spread awareness. For more information about the 2027 PSA Contest, launching September 14, [click here](#).
- Visit [Prevent Suicide PA's Suicide Prevention Online Learning Center](#) and take a free suicide prevention training.
- Promote equity in mental health and suicide prevention awareness efforts by sharing [tailored resources](#) from diverse populations in your community.
- View selected presentations from a [past STAR-Center Conference](#), such as the 2026 keynote on "Artificial Intelligence + Human Connection." Keynotes and workshops from past conferences are available on the website.

The following national and international associations have developed resource guides containing additional lists of activities and ideas that can be implemented across settings:

- International Association for Suicide Prevention (IASP): [World Suicide Prevention Day 2026](#)
- Suicide Prevention Resource Center: [Suicide Prevention Month Ideas for Action](#)
- 988 Crisis & Suicide Lifeline: [National Suicide Prevention Month](#)
- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA): [Suicide Prevention Month Toolkit](#)

Creating an Effective Message for Suicide Prevention Across the Lifespan

While focusing on prevention efforts can seem overwhelming at times, your words and actions can help save a life. Here are some overarching guidelines for the development of your messaging to prevent suicide.

Evoke shared values

*Who are you attempting to reach? Schools? Faith-based institutions? First Responders?
Identify the value you want them to work toward.*

Example: Everyone deserves to feel safe, supported, and heard.

Acknowledge negative feelings, like discomfort, fear, or lingering doubts

By acknowledging difficulty, doubt, and discomfort, you can help your audience manage their feelings and avoid using them as a reason to avoid the subject.

Example: I realize that talking about the issue of suicide can make some of us uncomfortable.

Model a journey toward change, it's starting point and pivotal moments

Provide the next steps on how you will make prevention possible. Engage with survivors of suicide loss and individuals with lived experiences to light the way of healing for others.

Example: Many people have shared that hearing personal stories from survivors of suicide loss helped them feel connected and sparked hope, even in their most difficult times.

State the problem precisely

Identify what piece of the problem you are wanting to address. Choose information or a fact to support it.

Example: Feelings of discomfort or shame make it hard for people to talk about suicide, and that silence makes it hard for people to reach out and find help.

Show Progress

Identify examples (big or small) of how prevention efforts have helped your community.

Example: Trainings, such as QPR Suicide Prevention for Gatekeepers and Mental Health First Aid, have helped people learn to speak about these issues and offer support and assistance to people who are struggling with feelings of helplessness or despair.

Name concrete solutions

Be realistic. Make it achievable.

Example: We will provide training to individuals throughout our community so they can learn how to recognize the signs, respond, and refer someone to safety.

Adapted with permission from *Moving Toward Prevention: A Guide for Reframing Sexual Violence*.

© 2018 National Sexual Violence Resource Center and Berkeley Media Studies Group.

Social Media

Use popular hashtags #WSPD, #WorldSuicidePreventionDay, #NSPM, #SuicidePreventionMonth, #SuicidePrevention, #988, and #BeThe1To to add your voice to the larger Suicide Prevention Month conversation happening on social media. Consider tagging Jana Marie Foundation, Aavidum, and Prevent Suicide PA in your posts so those accounts can reshare your content.

Sample Social Media Posts (to be copied or adapted):

To be posted on 9/8, 988 Day:

- You are not alone. There is help and hope. If you or a loved one need emotional support, call 988 [or insert your local crisis number]. Free. Confidential. Available 24/7. No judgment—just support. #NSPM #SuicidePreventionMonth #SuicidePrevention, #988Day

To be posted on 9/10:

- Today is World Suicide Prevention Day. A simple check-in can make a powerful impact. Reach out to someone and let them know they matter. #WSPD #WorldSuicidePreventionDay #SuicidePrevention
- This year's World Suicide Prevention Day theme is "Strengthening the Connection: Expanding the Conversation." Connection is prevention and anyone can play a role in suicide prevention by reaching out. Not sure where to begin? Visit seizetheawkward.org for conversation tips. #WSPD #WorldSuicidePreventionDay #SuicidePrevention

To be posted anytime in September:

- We can all play a role to play in suicide prevention. Learning how to recognize the warning signs and how to support someone who may be struggling could save a life. Learn more at janamariefoundation.org/get-informed/candid-conversations #SuicidePreventionMonth #SuicidePrevention
- Conversations don't have to be perfect to make an impact. This Suicide Prevention Month, let's strengthen our connections and expand our conversations. The more we create spaces where people feel safe to be honest, the more we remind one another that no one has to face life's challenges alone. Showing up, listening, and offering support can make all the difference. #BeThe1To reach out. #NSPM #SuicidePreventionMonth #SuicidePrevention
- This Suicide Prevention Month, let's move beyond awareness by strengthening our connections and expanding our conversations. Ask someone how they're really doing. Listen a little longer. Check back in again tomorrow. Let's do more than just talk about mental health. Let's create communities where everyone feels accepted, appreciated, acknowledged, and cared for. Connection can change a life. #NSPM #SuicidePreventionMonth #SuicidePrevention #YouMatter
- There are many misconceptions about suicide, and those myths can prevent people from getting help. Take a moment to learn the facts: preventsuicidepa.org/myths-misconceptions. Knowledge is power. Compassion is key. #NSPM #SuicidePreventionMonth #EndTheStigma
- One conversation can make a difference. If someone in your life is struggling, don't be afraid to check in, listen without judgment, and help them connect with support. No one should have to face life's hardest moments alone. Call or text 988 to connect with the Suicide & Crisis Lifeline. #NSPM #SuicidePreventionMonth #SuicidePrevention
- Did you know most social media platforms allow you to report concerns if a friend is in crisis? Learn how to use these tools to support those you care about: 988lifeline.org/help-someone-else/safety-and-support-on-social-media #BeThe1To #NSPM #SuicidePreventionMonth #SuicidePrevention



Connection is Prevention

Promoting healthy connections is foundational to upstream suicide prevention as social connectedness is a key protective factor across the lifespan against various negative outcomes. These connections foster a sense of belonging, reduce feelings of isolation, and provide emotional and practical support that can buffer people against stress, trauma, and mental health challenges."

-- [The National Action Alliance](#) | [Moving Suicide Prevention Upstream](#)

Upstream Prevention in Pennsylvania

Community-based Peer Support

Peer Support Services - Specialized therapeutic interactions with self-identified current or former consumers of behavioral health services who are trained and certified to offer support and assistance with recovery and community-integration process.

Health & Social Collaboration

PA Navigate - An online tool that connects Pennsylvanians with community-based organizations, county and state agencies, and healthcare providers, for referrals to community resources that help them meet their most basic needs such as food, shelter, transportation, and more.

Workplace Wellness

State Employee Assistance Program (SEAP) - Employee Assistance Programs, like the State Employee Assistance Program (SEAP) available to Commonwealth employees, are a free service designed to assist individuals and their family members in resolving a wide variety of problems that may impact their job performance.

Youth Connectedness

Pennsylvania's Black Youth Suicide Prevention Workgroup - Invested in engaging Black youth and families, building strategic partnerships, identifying and reviewing data, and promoting culturally affirming suicide prevention resources.

Older Adult Engagement

Healthy IDEAS - An evidence-based community depression intervention program designed to detect and reduce the severity of depressive symptoms in older adults through community-based case management.

Senior Community Centers - The Commonwealth is home to over 422 Senior Community Centers which function as the cornerstones of connection within communities and serve as pillars of daily life for older adults. Within these centers, older adults can receive a nutritious meal, partake in social activities, and access a range of programs.

Veteran Connections

VETConnect - DMVA's VETConnect is a free information and referral database that allows veterans and veteran advocates access to statewide resources that improve the lives of service members, veterans, and their families.



Local Suicide Prevention Month Efforts

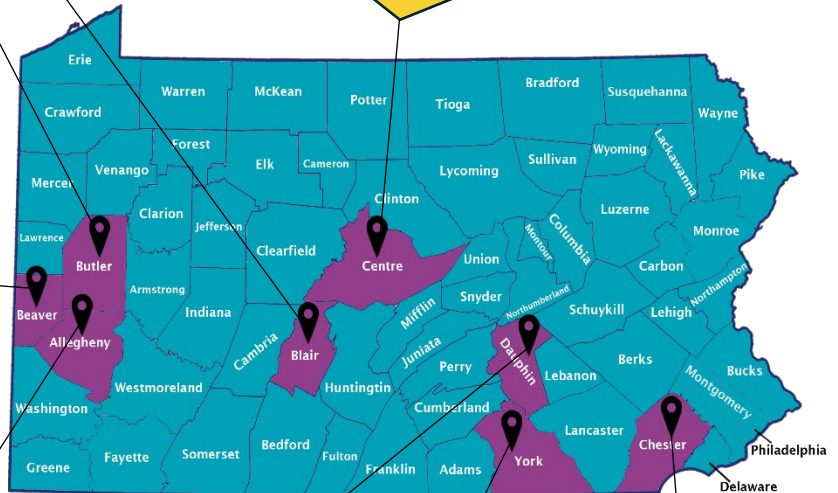
An abundance of suicide prevention work occurs at the local level in Pennsylvania all year. There are many events, activities, and campaigns planned throughout the Commonwealth, particularly during Suicide Prevention Month. Below are highlights from a few counties to share ideas and make connections. If you are interested in having your county's efforts highlighted in next year's guide, please fill out this [form](#) to let us know.

Butler County holds an annual **Suicide Awareness Remembrance Rally** to remember those lost to suicide, share lived experiences and highlight area resources. Butler County Crisis Line invites attendees to write messages of **hope** to display at the crisis center.

Blair County is hosting an AFSP Out of the Darkness **walk**.

The Centre County Suicide Prevention Task Force hosts a **Suicide Prevention Rally** featuring speakers, live music, a county proclamation, and resources. Centre County also proudly shares about their work to add safety measures in parking garages.

The Beaver County Zero Suicide Task Force will hold a **community town hall**, focused on **education, prevention, and connection**. This event features speakers on Loss Teams and workplace suicide prevention for skilled trade industries. Additionally, a **countywide campaign** and the Youth Ambassador Program students will raise awareness of resources like 988 throughout the community and at sporting events.



In Allegheny County, Suicide Awareness for Everyone (SAFE) will partner with community organizations to host a special **screening** of "American Solitaire" and include a conversation with community members.

Dauphin County ASPIRE will offer QPR, CAMS Care, and ASIST **training** for local community members.

Chester County Suicide Prevention Partnership will host a **screening** of the documentary, "The Journey Home," followed by a **community conversation**.

Suicide Prevention of York, a prevention, invention and postvention nonprofit, will provide **education** across the county.

Statewide Public Health Initiatives

Pennsylvania (PA) saw a decrease in the rate of death by suicide from 2023 to 2024 (EDDIE, 2026). It is important to acknowledge the synergy of public health efforts across the Commonwealth that are contributing to suicide prevention. These efforts are happening at all levels, including statewide, county, community, and within individual organizations. Below is a snapshot of ongoing implementation efforts overseen by state agencies. These initiatives strive to use data-driven and evidence-informed approaches to continue their impact over time.

988 | SUICIDE & CRISIS LIFELINE

For over 10 years, PA has been working with national partners to increase capacity to answer calls from Pennsylvanians experiencing a crisis. Since the implementation of the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline in 2022, Pennsylvania's 14 call centers have maintained a monthly average in-state answer rate of 90%. Pennsylvanians can call, chat, or text 988 to receive 24/7, free, confidential care.

PA Suicide Prevention Task Force

PA's Suicide Prevention Task Force (SPTF) brings together multiple state agencies and Governor's Affinity Commissions dedicated to suicide prevention in the Commonwealth. The SPTF was formed in 2019 for the purpose of developing and overseeing PA's statewide suicide prevention plan. The SPTF recently developed a new, two-year plan and continues to collaborate to advance suicide prevention as a priority in PA.

Suicide and Overdose Death Review Teams

The PA Department of Health's suicide and overdose fatality review initiative, enabled by Act 101 of 2022, establishes county level teams to analyze suicide and overdose deaths and strengthen prevention systems. These teams review data to better understand contributing factors and pinpoint gaps in care and coordination. The program creates a structured, data driven framework designed to strengthen systems of care and reduce suicide and overdose fatalities across the Commonwealth.

PA's VA/SAMHSA Governor's Challenge

Since 2020, Pennsylvania's Department of Military and Veterans Affairs has led PA's VA/SAMHSA Governor's Challenge, working closely with partners at the federal, state, and local levels. This initiative is focused on promoting firearm safe storage and lethal means safety, raising awareness, and disseminating mental health and substance use education and resources to prevent suicide among service members, veterans, and their families (SMVF). The Plan. Pause. Protect. Campaign is a proactive suicide prevention strategy that everyone can access, encouraging people to plan for safety, pause to reflect, and protect life.

Garrett Lee Smith (GLS) Youth Suicide Prevention Grant

Since 2008, PA's Department of Human Services has received GLS grants from SAMHSA to work towards preventing youth suicide. The current project builds on previous grants by using the Zero Suicide framework to support cross-systems collaboration and timely referrals to evidence-based care for youth at risk of suicide. It is also focused on building partnerships to empower the voices of those with lived experience and create statewide suicide prevention resources to support youth and families.

Mental Wellness Resources

Our mental and emotional health are just as important as our physical health, yet stigma and shame have often made these topics taboo to discuss. As we continue to see an increase in mental health needs across our communities, we must bring mental health and well-being to the forefront of conversations. We all can play a vital role in promoting connectedness and resiliency.

Self-care:

- [Mental Health Mobile Apps](#): a compiled list of mobile apps for mental health and wellness.
- [Virtual Calming Room](#): Jana Marie Foundation created a virtual calming room for students, teachers, and caring adults to find tools and strategies for managing emotions and building resiliency.
- [The Trevor Project Self-Care Guide for LGBTQ+ Young People](#): includes ways to practice self-care in various settings.
- [Pause-Reset-Nourish \(PRN\) to Promote Wellbeing](#): provides information about a specific self-care strategy by the National Child Traumatic Stress Network.
- [Stress First Aid](#): Manuals and resources for health care workers available through the U.S. Dept of Veterans Affairs.

Resources for Adult Populations:

- [Mental Health America BIPOC Mental Health Month Resources](#)
- [The Jed Foundation: How to Find a Therapist Who Understands Your Background](#)
- [National LGBT Health Education Center: Suicide Risk and Prevention for LGBTQ People](#)
- [National Action Alliance: Veteran and Military Suicide Prevention Resources](#)
- [Rural Health Information Hub: Rural Suicide Prevention Toolkit](#)
- [SAMHSA and E4 Center of Excellence for Behavioral Health Disparities in Aging: Equity Focused Suicide Prevention Resources for Older Adults](#)

Resources for Families, Schools, and Community Settings:

- [Mind Matters Curriculum by Jana Marie Foundation](#)
- [Mental Health Curriculum by Aavidum](#)
- [Prevent Suicide PA's Suicide Prevention Online Learning Center](#)
- [Compassion Resilience Toolkit by Wisconsin Dept. of Public Instruction, Wise, and Rogers Behavior Health](#)
- [Seize the Awkward by Ad Council, American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, and The Jed Foundation](#)
- [PA Parent and Family Alliance: How Do I Talk to My Child About Suicide?](#)



Substance Use and Suicide

Substance use and suicide are closely linked, as alcohol and drugs can increase impulsivity, worsen mental health, and lower inhibitions, making suicidal thoughts more likely to turn into actions. Addressing substance use is an important part of suicide prevention and overall mental health care.

The graphic to the right reviews some important information regarding substance use and suicide.

Download the Graphic

[Here:](#)



SUBSTANCE USE AND SUICIDE

DATA

Alcohol intoxication is a factor in **22%** of suicide deaths.¹

20% of suicide deaths involve opiates.¹

While intentional overdose deaths have decreased overall, there has been an increase amongst:²



15-24 year olds
75-84 year olds
Black women over 18



COMPLEX RISK FACTORS

Both substance use disorder and suicide are complex, with multiple contributing factors including:^{3,4,5}

- Trauma
- Diagnosed mental health condition
- Lack of access to care
- Biology and environment

SHARED PROTECTIVE FACTORS

There are shared factors that both decrease risk of, and help those with, suicidal ideation and substance use, including:^{3,4,5}

- Positive connections
- Help-seeking behavior
- Supportive environment
- Sense of purpose



CONTINUING THE CONVERSATION



Many people with mental health and substance use concerns believe they should be able to handle it on their own.³

Having a supportive, non-judgmental conversation with someone can go a long way towards prevention.

For free, confidential, 24/7 mental health and/or substance use treatment and referral information call **1-800-662-HELP (4357)**

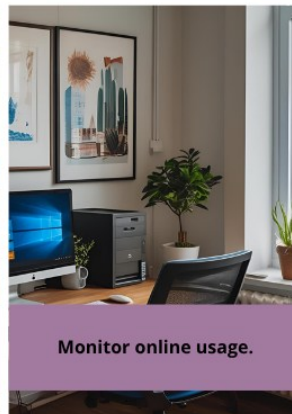
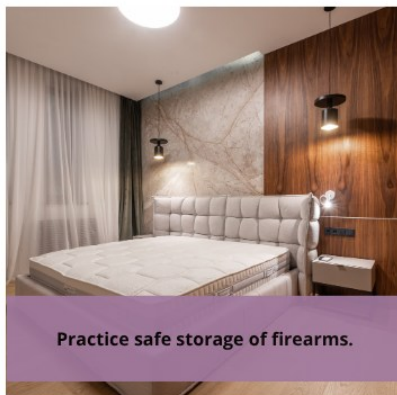
SUBSTANCE USE PREVENTION IS SUICIDE PREVENTION
SUICIDE PREVENTION IS SUBSTANCE USE PREVENTION

1. <https://library.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/sma16-4935.pdf>
2. <https://psychiatryonline.org/doi/10.1176/appi.ajp.2021.21060604>
3. <https://www.samhsa.gov/data/sites/default/files/reports/rpt47095/National%20Report/National%20Report/2023-ncduh-annual-national.htm#substx>
4. <https://www.ccsa.ca/sites/default/files/2019-04/CCSA-Substance-Use-Suicide-Prevention-Youth-Summary-2016-en.pdf>
5. <https://www.ccsa.ca/sites/default/files/2024-02/Intersections-of-Substance-Use-and-Suicide-Evidence-and-Key-Take-Aways.pdf>

Keeping Environments Safe

We can all do our part of creating and maintaining safe environments. Research shows that putting time and distance between a lethal means—such as a firearm—and those who may be in crisis can prevent suicide and save lives. Below is a graphic portraying strategies to consider for keeping your home environment safe, particularly when a loved one is at risk of suicide.

Creating and Maintaining Safe Environments



Resources:

- National Action Alliance's [Lethal Means & Suicide Prevention: A Guide for Community & Industry Leaders](#)
- [Counseling on Access to Lethal Means \(CALM\)](#)
- Zero Suicide: [Lethal Means Safety Resources](#)
- Children's Safety Network's Firearm Safety: [Preventing Death by Suicide](#)
- Harvard School of Public Health: [Means Matter](#)
- [Hold My Guns](#)
- [Be SMART for Kids](#)
- [CeaseFirePA](#)

Download the Graphic [Here](#):



Did you know?

Creating a *safety plan* is a proven way to help someone manage suicidal thoughts and stay safe during a crisis. A safety plan includes personalized steps like recognizing warning signs, using coping strategies, reaching out to support people, and keeping environments safe. It's simple, effective, and can save lives.

Download or order SAMHSA's free safety planning template [here](#).

Postvention Response: An Important Part of the Suicide Prevention Conversation

Postvention is an essential component of [a comprehensive suicide prevention framework](#). Postvention is the response to a death by suicide and offers an array of services that may apply to any tragic loss. The goals of postvention are to promote the healing and recovery of those impacted by the loss of a family member, classmate, colleague, friend, or community member. If the death was a suicide, a postvention serves to help identify and refer those who may need additional support and reduce the risk of contagion and other adverse outcomes.

The resource links below provide information and guidance about established best practices for postvention.

School and College Campus Postvention Resources:

- [After a Suicide: A Toolkit for Schools, 2nd Edition](#)
- [National Center for School Crisis and Bereavement](#)
- [The National Childhood Traumatic Stress Network \(NCTSN\)](#)
- [Postvention: A Guide for Response to Suicide on College Campuses](#)
- [STAR-Center Postvention Standards Manual, 5th Edition](#)

Community and Workplace Postvention Resources:

- [A Manager's Guide to Suicide Prevention in the Workplace](#)
- [Local Outreach to Suicide Survivors \(LOSS\) Team](#)
- [Suicide Prevention Competencies for Faith Leaders: Supporting Life Before, During, and After a Suicidal Crisis](#)
- [Workplace Suicide Prevention](#)
- [After a Suicide: Postvention Toolkit for Workplaces](#)

Grief and Bereavement Resources:

- [American Foundation for Suicide Prevention's Support Group Locator](#)
- [American Foundation for Suicide Prevention: Children, Teens, and Suicide Loss](#)
- [Dougy Center](#)
- [Highmark Caring Place](#)
- [Suicide Loss: What Teens Need to Know](#)
- [Talking to Your Child about a Suicide Death: A Guide for Parents and Caregivers](#)

Sample Proclamation

An official signing of a proclamation by your county commissioners is a great way to publicize the kick-off for Suicide Prevention Month and the activities that will be taking place throughout the month. Below is sample proclamation verbiage:

Suicide Prevention Month 2026

Suicide Prevention Day, September 10, 2026

WHEREAS, suicide is a public health concern; and

WHEREAS, in the state of Pennsylvania, one person dies by suicide nearly every five hours, making it the leading cause of death for ages 10-14, and the second leading cause of death for ages 15—34 in 2024 (CDC, 2026); and

WHEREAS, over 5.4 million people in the United States have lost a loved one to suicide (CDC, 2019); and

WHEREAS, each member of our community is valued and irreplaceable; and

WHEREAS, talking openly about stress and psychological health builds trust, reduces barriers to care, and enables early intervention; and

WHEREAS, though we recognize there is no single cause or single solution to suicide, we know that access to support and treatment can save lives; and

WHEREAS, local and statewide suicide prevention efforts should be developed and encouraged to the maximum extent possible, and

WHEREAS, most suicides are preventable. By learning the signs and symptoms and limiting access to lethal means, we can work together to help prevent suicide.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED the [COUNTY] Board of Commissioners does hereby proclaim September 2026 as “Suicide Awareness and Prevention Month” and September 10, 2026 as “Suicide Awareness and Prevention Day” in [COUNTY].

Proclaimed this _____ day of _____, 2026

[COUNTY] Board of Commissioners,

Name, Title



Looking for support?



988 is here for you

988

 | SUICIDE & CRISIS
LIFELINE

What is it?

- Mental health, substance use, and suicidal crisis support for you & your loved ones
- Free and confidential
- Available 24/7/365 for anyone and everyone who needs it
- Trained, compassionate counselors

How to Connect



Call
988

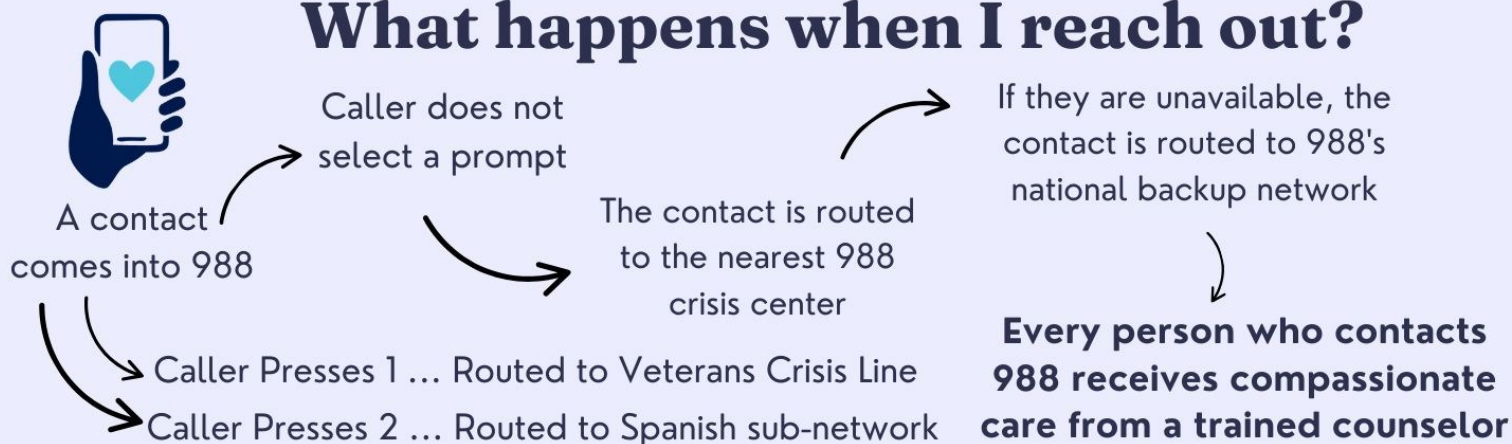


Text
988



Chat
chat.988lifeline.org

What happens when I reach out?



**Scan to save 988
to your contacts!**



988 in Pennsylvania

- 14 crisis centers answering 988 calls
- An in-state back-up network to catch calls before they go to the national back-up
- 145,000+ contacts (calls, chats, & texts) answered in 2025

Interested in learning more? Visit 988lifeline.org

You matter, and you are not alone. Help is always available.

PA Crisis Services: Know Who to Call

All services connect; we'll guide you wherever you need.
These services are available
24/7 for all ages

988
SUICIDE & CRISIS
LIFELINE



1 (800) 222-1222

Someone to Call for....	Behavioral Health Crisis	Emergency Response	Poison Control
Immediate help or rescue required			
Overdose in progress OR medical emergency			
Someone is a serious or immediate threat to self or others			
Suicide attempt in progress			
Exposure to a chemical			
Purposeful OR accidental exposure to poisons (medicines, drugs, substances)			
Question about a potential poison			
Medicine mistakes or errors			
Animal bite/sting			
Mental health crisis			
Substance use crisis			
Suicidal thoughts			
Crisis stabilization			
Follow-up services			
Referrals			



Scan this QR for Pennsylvania's county-based mental health information & resources

Developed in collaboration with
Jefferson Health and
the David Farber ASPIRE Center

Crisis Resources

You are not alone. Many organizations are working each and every day to support you and your efforts with suicide prevention. Please consider using these crisis lines and resources in your messaging during Suicide Prevention Month.

National:

- [988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline](https://988lifeline.org/chat): call or text **988**; or to chat with someone over the computer visit 988lifeline.org/chat
 - [Veterans Suicide Prevention Lifeline](https://988lifeline.org/chat): **988, press 1**
 - [Spanish Suicide Prevention Lifeline](https://988lifeline.org/chat): **988, press 2**
- Crisis Text Line: **TEXT PA to 741741** or visit <http://www.crisistextline.org/>
- The Trevor Project: 1-866-488-7386, text 678-678, or visit <https://www.thetrevorproject.org>
- Trans Lifeline: 1-877-565-8860 <https://www.translifeline.org>

Pennsylvania:

- [List](#) of Crisis Intervention contact information by county.
- [County Task Force Resources](#): By county, available contact information is provided for crisis, the Suicide Prevention Task Force, local chapter of AFSP, and other local mental health/suicide prevention resources.
- [University of Pittsburgh STAR-Center Postvention Services](#): Consultation for school districts and agencies regarding postvention. Call 412-864-3346, available 24/7.
- [AgriStress Helpline for Pennsylvania farmers and their families](#), available 24/7. Call or text 1-833-897-AGRI (2474).

National and State Organizations

National:

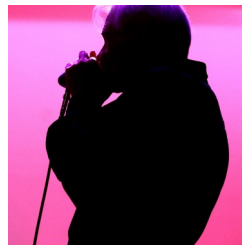
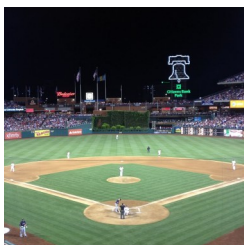
- American Association of Suicidology (AAS): <http://www.suicidology.org/>
- American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP): <https://afsp.org/>
- The Jed Foundation: <https://jedfoundation.org/>
- Suicide Prevention Resource Center (SPRC): <http://www.sprc.org/>

Pennsylvania:

- Jana Marie Foundation: <http://www.janamariefoundation.org/>
- Aavidum: <http://aavidum.com>
- Prevent Suicide PA: <http://preventsuicidepa.org/>
- Pennsylvania Network for Student Assistance Services (PNSAS): <http://pnsas.org/>
- Services for Teens at Risk (STAR) Center: www.starcenter.pitt.edu
- PA Department of Human Services: [Suicide Prevention](#)
- PA Department of Agriculture: [Mental Wellness Resources for the Agricultural Community](#)
- PA Department of Military and Veterans Affairs: [Suicide Prevention](#)



Working Together.



Organizations across the state of Pennsylvania continue to work together to provide mental health and suicide prevention education and awareness events. Jana Marie Foundation, Garrett Lee Smith Youth Suicide Prevention Grant, Prevent Suicide PA, Aavidum, and the Services for Teens At Risk (STAR) Center are proud to provide this informational packet to help you build awareness and take action to prevent suicide within your community.

About Jana Marie Foundation

Jana Marie Foundation, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization based in State College, Pennsylvania, harnesses the power of creative expression and open dialogue to spark conversations, build connections, and promote mental wellness among young people and their communities. With programs offered throughout Central Pennsylvania and beyond, the Foundation envisions communities working together to knock down walls and transform emotional distress into resilience and hope. Guided by best practices and research, Jana Marie Foundation delivers evidence-based mental health and suicide prevention programs that equip individuals with the knowledge, skills, and confidence to recognize warning signs and offer support. Its engaging youth programs—ranging from leadership development to arts-based initiatives—empower young people to build resilience, develop healthy coping strategies, and strengthen their mental health. In addition, the Foundation facilitates a Survivors of Suicide Loss group for adults, providing a compassionate space for those grieving the loss of a loved one to suicide to connect, share, and heal together.

<https://janamariefoundation.org>

About Garrett Lee Smith Youth Suicide Prevention Grant

The Garrett Lee Smith Youth Suicide Prevention Grant (2024-2029) is a five-year federal SAMHSA grant awarded to the Pennsylvania Office of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services at the Department of Human Services (DHS-OMHSAS). Using a two-tiered model, this project focuses on youth under the age of 24. Tier 1 is statewide and partners with youth serving organizations to support families who have a youth at risk of suicide and to elevate the voices of youth and families with suicide-centered lived experience. Tier 2 works with specific counties to build capacity for evidence-based treatment and improve coordination to provide timely access to care for youth at risk of suicide.

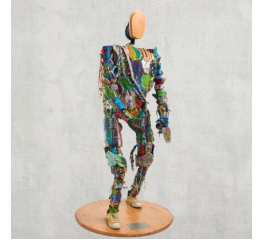
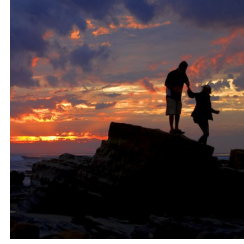
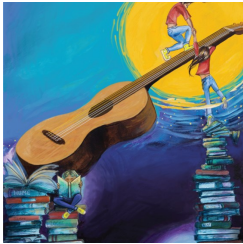
About Prevent Suicide PA

Prevent Suicide PA supports those who are affected by suicide, provides education, awareness, and understanding by collaborating with the community to prevent suicide, and reduces the stigma associated with suicide. The organization envisions having a Commonwealth where every life is valued, that everyone has the support necessary to get help when needed, and that hope and healing abounds in every person.

<http://preventsuicidepa.org/>



Working Together, Continued



About Aavidum

Aavidum is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization that empowers youth to shatter the silence surrounding depression, suicide, and other issues facing teens. The word Aavidum, which means “I’ve got your back,” was created by students after a classmate died by suicide. Aavidum uses free student-driven clubs, curricula, and other programming to inspire schools and communities to adopt cultures of care and advocacy, encouraging all members to have their friends’ backs. Aavidum exists in nearly 300 elementary schools, middle schools, high schools, and colleges.

<http://aavidum.org/>

About Services for Teens At Risk (STAR) Center

Services for Teens At Risk (STAR) Center is a specialty clinical, training, and research program within the division of Child and Adolescent Services at UPMC Western Psychiatric Hospital (WPH) and the University of Pittsburgh Department of Psychiatry. STAR Center provides outpatient assessment and treatment for depressed, anxious, and suicidal children and youth. Services were expanded in 2007 to include [Intensive Outpatient Programs](#) (IOP) for depressed and suicidal teens and further in 2017 to an IOP designated for transition-age college students. [STAR Center Outreach](#) adapts and disseminates information about best practice clinical care into practical guidelines for educational and community settings and offers trainings and consultations. Additionally, STAR Center offers a Survivors of Suicide bereavement support group to adults who have lost a loved one to suicide. The group provides a safe environment for survivors to voice the painful feelings that suicide leaves in its wake. STAR Center strives to integrate education, intervention, and research into a seamless whole.

This document was developed in part under grant number SM090046 from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). The views, policies, and opinions expressed are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of SAMHSA, HHS or the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services.