

STATE OF COLORADO



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of Public Health
and Environment

Suicide Prevention in Colorado Programs and Activities

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Office of Suicide Prevention Annual Legislative Report

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Suicide is the second leading cause of death in every age group from 10 to 34. In 2004, 792 Coloradans died by suicide, more than the number of Coloradans who died in motor vehicle crashes (691 deaths). Additionally in 2004, 2,696 Coloradans were hospitalized for a suicide attempt. Every suicide death in Colorado is estimated to cost an average of \$2,091 in medical costs and over \$1 million dollars in work-loss costs. Every suicide attempt in Colorado is estimated to cost an average of \$7,964 in medical costs and \$13,715 in work-loss costs.

Pursuant to 25-1-107, C.R.S., the Office of Suicide Prevention at the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment is required to report annually on or before the first day of November on the status of the program's efforts to coordinate statewide suicide prevention services. The goal of this report is to consolidate in-depth knowledge about current suicide prevention activities at the state and local level, private and public partnerships and statewide programs that address prevention and intervention to reduce suicidal behavior.

The charge of the Office of Suicide Prevention is to address suicide and suicidal behavior among Coloradans of all ages in order to reduce the suicide rate in Colorado. Serving as the lead agency coordinating suicide prevention programs, the Office of Suicide Prevention achieved the following:

- 1) limiting duplication of suicide prevention efforts by serving as an information and resource clearinghouse;
- 2) maintaining a strong statewide system of suicide prevention through networking opportunities for individuals and organizations;
- 3) conducting town hall meetings in communities to assess the needs of local coalitions and to provide information, resources and technical assistance for suicide prevention programming at the local level;
- 4) creating and maintaining a network of trainers in suicide intervention/prevention skills who collaborate with one another to provide effective prevention training programs throughout the state;
- 5) maintaining a strong partnership with the Suicide Prevention Coalition of Colorado, a statewide organization with representation from public/private entities;
- 6) ensuring the 1-800-SUICIDE crisis hotline number is operational 24 hours per day, seven days per week;
- 7) adding a second hotline number, the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-TALK, for Coloradans who may be less likely to access a hotline number with the word SUICIDE;
- 8) responding to communities in the aftermath of a suicide, providing resources and referrals;
- 9) developing suicide prevention expertise within the Office of Suicide Prevention.

The Office of Suicide Prevention's strategic work plan, guided by the state Suicide Prevention and Intervention Plan, includes the following program areas:

- technical support and capacity building;
- statewide needs and resources assessment;
- training;
- public awareness and education campaign;
- grant making to local suicide prevention efforts.

Technical Support and Capacity Building

The Office of Suicide Prevention solidified its partnership with the American Association of Suicidology by participating on the Program Committee of the national conference in Broomfield, CO, April 13-16, 2005. The Office jointly hosted a statewide networking session for all Colorado conference participants and national experts to coordinate national and state suicide prevention efforts.

The Office of Suicide Prevention continued to collaborate and provide consultation to The Colorado Trust on their Preventing Suicide in Colorado initiative to ensure that suicide prevention services are coordinated in the ten communities receiving funding through this initiative.

The Office of Suicide Prevention solidified key private and public partnerships through participation on statewide committees including the Colorado Child Fatality Review, the Injury Prevention Advisory Committee, the Colorado Violent Death Reporting System Advisory Committee, the Youth Violence Prevention Advisory Group, the Interagency School Health Team, and the Problem Gambling Coalition of Colorado. These partnerships resulted in the coordination of prevention recommendations, data collection, and service delivery from state agencies.

The Office of Suicide Prevention was invited to join the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline steering committee to provide consultation from a state perspective on crisis lines.

The Office of Suicide Prevention continues to provide support to the 1-800-SUICIDE hotline number. This year a second national crisis line was added for Coloradans who may be less likely to access a suicide hotline: 1-800-273-TALK. The numbers are part of a nationwide network with a mission to provide immediate assistance to individuals in suicide crisis. The numbers are served by the Pueblo Suicide Prevention Center, an American Association of Suicidology certified center. The hotlines are staffed 24 hours a day, seven days a week with volunteers trained to respond to crisis calls. The Pueblo Suicide Prevention Center staff continually updates their knowledge of resources in every county of the state in order to answer effectively all calls originating in Colorado. The continued support of this hotline is critical to suicide prevention efforts in Colorado. Calls to the hotline increased by 62 percent over one year, concurrent with the public service announcement campaign. The 1-800-SUICIDE number is listed as a crisis resource on every document created and distributed through the Office of Suicide Prevention. As documents are reprinted, the 1-800-273-TALK number is added. The Office of Suicide Prevention encourages all programs and communities to advertise these numbers as a resource as well.

Statewide Needs and Resources Assessment

The Office of Suicide Prevention has partnered with the Suicide Prevention Coalition of Colorado to foster strong collaboration and coordination with local suicide prevention efforts by holding town hall meetings. In the past year, four town hall meetings were held in Grand Junction for Mesa County, in Alamosa for the San Luis Valley, in Sterling for Northeastern Colorado, and in Steamboat Springs for Moffat and Routt counties. Each town hall meeting was jointly hosted with the local suicide prevention coalition and featured presentations by the Office of Suicide Prevention, the Suicide Prevention Coalition of Colorado and the local coalition. The discussion of local needs, as well as the identification of barriers and solutions resulted in valuable connections among service providers and local and state

entities. Important feedback included the need to strengthen statewide connections. Several state and local policy makers, and representatives from the public and private sector attended the four meetings, for a total attendance of 135 people.

The Office of Suicide Prevention supports strong community based suicide prevention. Over the past year, the Office of Suicide Prevention met with community suicide prevention leaders in Pueblo, El Paso, Adams, Larimer, Weld, Mesa, Montrose, Delta, Alamosa, Logan, and Moffat and Routt counties to assess their needs. The Office of Suicide Prevention also provided technical assistance to Colorado communities and grantees throughout the year. Examples of the technical assistance provided include training on developing an effective suicide prevention coalition, and information about containment of suicide contagion. The purpose of this assistance is to create greater capacity for local suicide prevention efforts.

The Office of Suicide Prevention conducted a survey of stakeholders to determine the effectiveness of the Office. A majority of the respondents agreed that the Office has a clearly defined mission, is attentive to all geographic areas of the state, has improved the overall coordination of suicide prevention services in the state, has increased the public's awareness about suicide issues, has improved cross-agency collaboration, and is equally attentive to youth/adult/elder suicide issues. Suggestions were to continue to disseminate information about the Office of Suicide Prevention to rural areas, through town hall meetings or media. Respondents also identified the need for additional materials, trainings, and community grant funding distributed through the Office.

Training

The Office of Suicide Prevention continues to make training a priority resulting in a significant increase to the trainer network this year. The Office of Suicide Prevention funded three "training for trainers" events in the nationally acclaimed Yellow Ribbon Suicide Prevention Program and the Suicide Awareness for Everyone Program (SAFE:TEEN) resulting in 62 new trainers in school and community based suicide prevention. The **Yellow Ribbon** training for trainers program prepares individuals to offer training in community initiative development, suicide prevention implementation strategies, and suicide intervention training highlighting the key message that it is "always okay to ask for help." The **SAFE:TEEN** program prepares trainers to work with schools to train staff, parents, and students to recognize and respond to suicidal youth.

The Office of Suicide Prevention coordinated 30 trainers who partnered to present 33 trainings in LivingWorks Education-Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST) across Colorado, resulting in a total of 536 new community gatekeepers. These gatekeepers are trained to recognize warning signs and connect suicidal individuals to professional help. There have been more than 1,994 community members trained to-date through ASIST. Post-evaluations, measuring knowledge gain and comfort level regarding suicide risk assessment and intervention strategies, have reflected an average rating of 9 on a 10-point scale.

Public Awareness and Education Campaign

The Office of Suicide Prevention partnered with the Suicide Prevention Coalition of Colorado to provide the third annual statewide suicide prevention conference in August 2005, with over 150 attendees from across Colorado. National speakers presented on school based suicide prevention and the needs of

individuals who attempt suicide. The Office of Suicide Prevention presented on *Clinical Treatment of Suicidality*. Evaluations from conference participants revealed scores of “very effective” with regard to speakers and content.

The Office of Suicide Prevention also collaborated on the planning of a tribute dinner, which attracted over 250 people from across Colorado. Dr. Robert Freedman, chair of the Department of Psychiatry at the University of Colorado Health Sciences Center, was honored for his contribution to the study of mental illness.

The Office of Suicide Prevention worked in conjunction with representatives from the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention and Ant Hill Marketing for the dissemination of public service announcements focusing on teen suicide prevention. The campaign has two main goals: 1) increase awareness and use of the 1-800-SUICIDE hotline by teens, and 2) reduce the secret-keeping behavior common among adolescents who are suicidal or have friends who are suicidal. Ant Hill Marketing provided the expertise for marketing the spots to the major media outlets in six Colorado communities: Denver, Larimer, Montezuma, Pitkin, Pueblo, and Weld.

The Office of Suicide Prevention funded several key coordination and public education activities of the Suicide Prevention Coalition of Colorado including an educational website, a quarterly newsletter with a distribution to 1,400 Coloradans, two speaker’s bureau trainings with 17 speakers trained, and distribution of suicide prevention information.

More than 21,288 pieces of public awareness materials were distributed to people and organizations from every region of the state regarding suicide, suicide prevention, and Colorado’s suicide prevention efforts. Materials included “community toolkits” which provided a sample suicide awareness presentation, outreach materials, current suicide data with information on how to access suicide data, an elderly depression booklet, guidelines for media reporting on suicide, and a resource book targeted to family members of individuals who have attempted suicide. Materials were distributed to attendees at the American Association of Suicidology Conference, the Colorado Public Health Association State Conference, the 3rd annual statewide suicide prevention conference, Colorado colleges and universities, school executives, school nurses, high schools, county health departments, hospitals, Colorado clergy, faith based communities and mental health centers across the state.

Grant Making to Local Suicide Prevention Efforts

The Suicide Prevention and Education Services Grant Program awarded seventeen grants providing up to \$8,000 each to local organizations for suicide prevention and education services. The grant program is designed to support efforts in Colorado communities that 1) develop suicide prevention expertise, 2) provide community-specific training or public awareness programs, 3) conduct evaluations of best practice programs or services that can be replicated in other communities. Grantees were selected from across the state, including the western slope, the central mountains, the front-range, the southwestern region of the state, and the metro area. Grant programs provided training, interventions, and resources to a variety of populations, including at-risk youth and adults, survivors of suicide, individuals with Depression and Bi-Polar Disorder, members of the Southern Ute Tribe, and other traditionally underserved populations.