

The HARI *Perspective*



September is [National Suicide Prevention Month](#), a time dedicated to sharing resources and stories in an effort to reduce the stigma surrounding this public health issue. Every year, September is recognized as a time to reach out to those affected by suicide, raise awareness, and connect individuals with suicidal thoughts to treatment services.

Nationally, suicide is ranked as the tenth leading cause of death for all ages. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) nearly 45,000 lives were lost to suicide in 2016. The CDC also ranks suicide as the second leading cause of death for young people ages 10-24. But suicide is preventable.

Preventing suicide involves the entire community and I am proud of the work our hospitals and state partners are doing to decrease these deaths. Recently released data ranks Rhode Island lowest in the nation for teen suicide and 43rd highest for adult suicide. We have been successful but there is more work to be done.

This year, several HARI member hospitals have pledged to participate in the [Zero Suicide Initiative](#), an international effort, that aims to improve care and outcomes for individuals at risk of suicide in healthcare systems. It represents a commitment to patient safety and to the safety and support of clinical staff. Three HARI member hospitals – Butler Hospital, South County Health and Westerly Hospital are participants in this initiative.

Butler Hospital's Zero Suicide Initiative was featured in the most recent edition of [Brown Medicine](#). The article describes the aim of the initiative to reduce the number of suicides in the hospital's inpatient programs and after patients are discharged.

The "Zero Suicide in Washington County" initiative was [announced](#) at a press conference this week at Harvest Acres Farm. The initiative, led by the South County Healthy Bodies, Healthy Minds collaborative, received \$2 million in federal funding and is aimed at reducing suicides through a set of comprehensive tools and evidence-based strategies. HARI member hospitals, South County Health and Westerly Hospital are leading participants of the initiative.

To mark National Suicide Prevention Month the [Providence VA Medical Center](#) is shining a light on effective ways to prevent Veteran suicide with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs [Be There](#) campaign. The campaign highlights the risk factors and warning signs for suicide, provides information about VA mental health and suicide prevention resources, and helps individuals and organizations start the conversation around Veteran mental health in their communities.

Similarly the Hospital Association of Rhode Island and its member hospitals have partnered with the Governor's Office, the Rhode Island Department of Health and Rhode Island Department of Behavioral Healthcare, Developmental Disabilities and Hospitals to launch [The Campaign to Change Direction](#). The Campaign aims to normalize mental health conversations through the use of a common language, known as "The Five Signs" – Not Feeling Like You, Agitation, Withdrawal, Caring for Yourself, and Hopelessness.

Every suicide death is preventable. HARI and its members are committed to working with community partners and state leaders to promote safe and supportive environments for individuals in crisis and to connect people at risk to effective and coordinated mental and physical healthcare. Please join us in this effort as we build a resilient community of hope and recovery to prevent suicide in Rhode Island.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "M. Teresa Paiva Weed". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Teresa Paiva Weed, HARI President