

## Suicide Prevention

In Washington State from 2008-2012, 4,773 people committed suicide. A firearm was used in 50% of these deaths. There were also 18,210 hospitalizations for a non-fatal suicide attempt. Eighty-three percent (83%) of the attempt hospitalizations were from the person trying to poison themselves. Other suicide causes include: suffocation/obstruction, cut/pierce, drowning, or motor vehicle-related.

Risk factors include: depression; previous suicide attempt(s); easy access to lethal means such as guns and medications; history of alcohol and other drug abuse; personal, job, and financial loss; hopelessness; aggressive tendencies; and physical or mental illness.

Also:

- ◆ If you or someone you know needs crisis help, call 1-800-273-TALK (8255).
- ◆ In Washington State, there are more than four times as many suicides as homicides.
- ◆ In 2011 there were 39,518 suicides in the United States--an average of 108 each day.
- ◆ In 2010 suicide data from 16 states with a National Violent Death Reporting System (NVDRS) showed 33% of suicide decedents tested positive for alcohol, 24% for antidepressants, and 20% for opiates, including heroin and prescription pain killers.
- ◆ Nationally, suicide cost an estimated \$34.6 billion in combined medical and work loss dollars.
- ◆ Each year, the human and economic cost of suicide ripples outward beyond the person. Surviving family members and close friends are deeply impacted by each suicide, and experience a range of complex grief reactions including, guilt, anger, abandonment, denial, helplessness, and shock (Jordon, 2001; AAS, 2008).

### Key Messages to Help Reduce Risks

- ◆ Remove firearms, at least temporarily, from the home of depressed persons, people who have attempted suicide, or those with at-risk behaviors.
- ◆ If you cannot remove firearms, store gun(s) locked and unloaded, with ammunition locked in a separate place.
- ◆ To reduce risk of youth suicides:
  - Parents need to realize their child likely knows where the gun(s) are stored and how to gain access, which is why they needed to be locked up.
  - It reduces risk to lock up medicines. Store them out of reach and out of sight of children.
  - Parents need to realize their child likely knows where medications are stored and how to gain access, which is why they need to be locked up.
  - Old and unused medicines need to be disposed of properly. Check in your community for medication drop boxes at law enforcement agencies, pharmacies, and special "Take Back" days (Usually April and September).

- ◆ Raise awareness that suicide is preventable through early detection and treatment of people who are depressed and or suicidal.
- ◆ Get depressed people of any age into medical and mental health treatment.
- ◆ Train gatekeepers - people who have routine contact with others through work, sports, school, and other settings - to see the warning signs and intervene.
- ◆ The three basic intervention skills are:
  - Show you care,
  - Ask the question – “Are you thinking of killing yourself?”
  - Get the person to help.
- ◆ Promote access to affordable mental health services and help people get needed help.

### **Information and Resources**

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [www.cdc.gov/ncipc](http://www.cdc.gov/ncipc)
- Lok-It-Up – Promoting the Safe Storage of Firearms [www.lokitup.org](http://www.lokitup.org)
- Suicide Prevention and Resource Center (SPRC) [www.sprc.org](http://www.sprc.org)
- WA State Injury & Violence Prevention Guide, January 2013 [Suicide \(PDF\)](#)
- Youth Suicide Prevention Program (YSPP) [www.yspp.org](http://www.yspp.org)

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