



Maryland Suicide Prevention and Early Intervention Network Newsletter

WITH HELP COMES HOPE

Suicide Prevention during the Holiday Season

Family gatherings, relationship tensions, isolation, limited contact with mental health providers, a lack of structure, and more downtime can make the holidays a difficult time for anyone living with a mental health condition. Despite these challenges, suicide rates are typically lowest during the holiday season, contrary to a persistent [myth](#).

Still, those living with suicidal thoughts, depression, or other mental health concerns may feel unease this time of year. Here are some **tips for preparing for the holiday season** if you find you need some extra support:

- Communicate with friends and family members about your mental health symptoms and your needs.
- Create a [safety plan](#) of resources and strategies you can use if you begin to feel

unsafe. Be sure to include a plan for reducing your access to lethal means.

- Develop a daily routine or structure for yourself that you can stick to.
- Discuss with your mental health care provider if you are able to check in with them over the break if needed.
- Practice [self-care](#).
- Reduce or eliminate social media use.
- Contact the helpline:
 - call 211 and press 1
 - text your zip code to 898-211
 - visit 211md.org



BHA Referral Services

Maryland's Commitment to Veterans (MCV) is a program devoted to total wellness for veterans and their families.

MCV provides training to the community about veteran-specific topics to improve awareness of available behavioral health resources. Regional resource coordinators provide assistance to veterans and their families to support a healthy transition to civilian life.

To connect to a regional resource coordinator, call the MCV referral line at **877-770-4801**.

211

Maryland

Get connected. Get help.
Call 211, press 1

Suicide Risk among Older Adults

While teenagers and those in midlife are two age groups most often associated with high suicide rates, older adults are a high risk population as well. Some consider this group to be largely forgotten in discussions around mental health and suicide, in part because of the misconception that they are often incapable of following through with such plans due to the decline of functioning that typically accompanies the aging process.

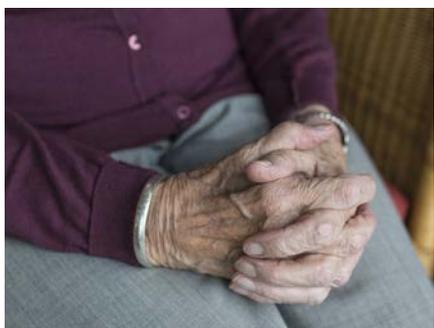


Image courtesy of [Canva](#).

In fact, the [Centers for Disease Control](#) report that more than 8,500 people over the age of 65 died by suicide in 2017 alone. For those 85 and older, the danger is even greater; they have the second highest rates of suicide of any demographic group within the United States.

A number of experiences common among the aging population, such as [physical illness](#), [loneliness and social isolation](#), [grief and loss](#), and [depression](#), have been linked to an increased risk of suicide and may explain these high rates.

Older adults who attempt suicide are also much more likely to die from their attempt than younger people. They often choose to use more fatal means and are less likely to physically

recover from an attempt or be found and saved before it is too late.

If you notice an older adult who is talking about feeling hopeless or burdensome, withdrawing from social supports, saying goodbye, rushing to modify their will, engaging in risky behaviors like alcohol or drug use, or acquiring lethal means such as collecting medication, they may be at risk for suicide.

Check in with them about any possible thoughts of suicide and connect them to crisis and other services – such as those that offer social connections or can increase independence – that may improve the underlying circumstances behind their thoughts of ending their life.

Resource Spotlight: Connect2Affect

Recognizing the importance of social connections in maintaining good physical and mental health, the AARP Foundation, in collaboration with other health care and aging organizations, launched [Connect2Affect](#), a new platform for older adults to find help and resources to combat social isolation.

Connect2Affect's website highlights that subjective feelings of loneliness can increase the risk of early death by 26%. This risk of early death is associated with poorer health outcomes, including a compromised immune system, vascular disease, and heart disease – and depression and suicide.

Connect2Affect features an assessment tool to identify if you or someone you know is at risk for social isolation and a [service locator](#) for older adults to find classes, [volunteer opportunities](#), senior centers, day programs, and transportation services.

They also provide additional tools and resources for people who interact with older adults in personal and professional spaces. If you are unsure how to [begin a conversation](#) about isolation or how to [encourage](#) older adults to stay connected, Connect2Affect can help.



Image courtesy of [Pixabay](#).

How do you stay connected? [Share your story](#) on their website and help others learn of resources they can use too.

TRAINING SNAPSHOT

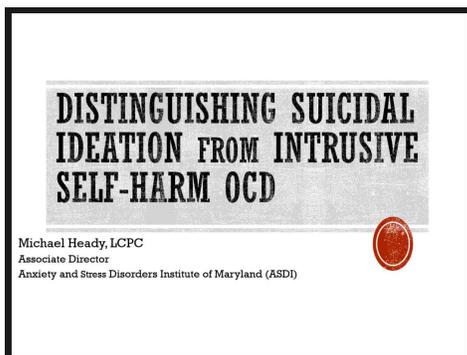
Recognizing and Responding to Suicide Risk

Calling all mental health clinicians: want to improve your core competencies in effectively assessing and managing your patients' suicide risk? Register to take this interactive training [now](#).



Distinguishing Suicidal Ideation from Intrusive Self-Harm OCD

On October 17, Michael Heady of the Anxiety and Stress Disorders Institute of Maryland presented on how suicidality and self-harm OCD differ, as part of our Lunch and Learn training series. Check out the [webinar](#)!



FAST FACTS

18%

[Older adults](#) account for 18% of all suicides in the United States, despite making up only 12% of the population.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Visit mdspin.eventbrite.com to register for our trainings and events.

2019: A Year in Review

In 2019, Maryland's Suicide Prevention Program was able to expand its current offerings and create new initiatives to reach more stakeholders, professionals, and community members than ever before. Check out some highlights from our work this year.

We held Maryland's 31st Annual Suicide Prevention Conference on October 2, 2019. This year, our 400 attendees participated in a total of 17 workshops, ranging from cultural perspectives on suicide prevention to the impact of online interactions on mental health. You can download some of this year's workshop presentations on our [website](#).

We also recently transitioned to 211 Maryland for our crisis helpline and introduced 24/7 crisis, chat, and text service. "211 press 1" provides an easy-to-remember three-digit number that Marylanders can call to speak to a trained crisis intervention specialist about a behavioral health concern. More than 22,000 calls were received by the helpline in Fiscal Year 2019.

In June, we released an introductory, online course on suicide prevention called [Recognize, Ask, Care, Encourage](#). Over 2,000 people have completed the module to date. A second module on suicide risk assessment and management for behavioral health professionals will be released by the end of the calendar year. We have also increased our other training offerings, including safeTALK, Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST), and our popular Lunch and Learn series, which is available in person and via webinar.

During National Suicide Prevention Month in September, we created a [toolkit](#) that included a sample

proclamation, a pledge, sample social media messaging, and a calendar of events to raise awareness of suicide. Our program was also instrumental in Governor Larry Hogan's declaration of Suicide Prevention Month in Maryland.



A local Starbucks store partnered with us during Suicide Prevention Month to provide information on the helpline to customers.

Did you catch us out in the community too? We have provided resources at a number of local events, including the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention's Out of the Darkness Walks, the National Alliance on Mental Illness's Annual Conference, and the Maryland Army National Guard's Resilience 5K.

Our program also works closely within the Governor's Commission on Suicide Prevention, who this year have developed workgroups to improve our data timeliness and dissemination, means safety, and training for physicians and behavioral health professionals.

Have suggestions? Email us at mdh.suicideprevention@maryland.gov and let us know what you would like to see from us in 2020.

Updates from the Field

Suicide Attempt Survivor Perspectives on Mental Health Care

Researchers reviewed suicide attempt survivors' stories of their lived experience with suicidality to identify contributing factors to their positive and negative experiences within the mental health care system. [Read more.](#)

How to Help a Coworker Who May Be at Risk for Suicide

Employees spend the majority of their waking hours in the workplace, and coworkers can be key to preventing suicides in the workplace. [Learn](#) how to support a coworker in crisis.

How a Proposed Three-Digit Suicide Hotline Could Help Prevention Efforts

In August, the Federal Communications Commission released a report proposing that Congress designate 988 as a new national crisis hotline phone number. [Read more.](#)

2019 National Veteran Suicide Prevention Annual Report

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) recently released the [2019 National Veteran Suicide Prevention Annual Report](#). The report includes veteran suicide data from 2005-2007 and prevention initiatives from the VA and other community partners.

Suicide in a Statewide Autism Population

A new [study](#) examined suicide deaths of individuals with autism spectrum disorders (ASD) and of the non-ASD population during a 20-year period. The study compared suicide death rates, circumstances surrounding deaths, and lethal methods used between the two groups.

Veterinarians Face Unique Issues that Make Suicide One of the Profession's Big Worries

Factors such as frequent exposure to death, pressure to offer free services, and financial worries put veterinarians at high risk of suicide. Veterinary clinics around the country are implementing initiatives to prevent veterinarian suicides. [Read more.](#)

Randomized Controlled Study of the Attempted Suicide Short Intervention Program

A 2016 [study](#) found that patients who recently attempted suicide and received the Attempted Suicide Short Intervention Program had lower rates of repeat attempts, when compared to patients who received a standard suicide risk assessment and treatment.

Colleges and Universities Expand Suicide Prevention Efforts Thanks to Federal Grant

SAMHSA awarded over \$2 million in Garrett Lee Smith Campus Suicide Prevention Grants to 24 higher education institutions in 2018. These colleges and universities are using the grants to train staff to identify and effectively support students who may be at risk for suicide. [Read more.](#)

Psychiatric Emergency Department Visits among U.S. Youth

Psychiatric emergency department visits increased 28% from 2011 to 2015 for youth and young adults ages 6-24, possibly indicating unmet mental health treatment needs among this age group. [Read more.](#)

Transgender Students Often Struggle with Mental Health

According to a new [study](#), transgender and nonbinary college students are four times more likely to experience mental health symptoms than cisgender students.

PTSD Symptoms and Suicide Attempts among Military Personnel

A new [study](#) of active duty military personnel who have been exposed to combat found that hyperarousal symptoms in PTSD was a significant predictor of suicide attempts.

As Rural Suicide Rates Increase in America, Studies Show Risk Is Not Randomly Distributed

Researchers found that suicide rates have increased the fastest in rural counties, according to a recent [study](#) of 1999 to 2016 data. Counties with the highest suicide rates experienced social fragmentation, less social capital, more gun shops, a high percentage of veterans, and a high percentage of uninsured residents.

Announcements

NIMH Notice of Intent for Funding Opportunity

NIMH released a [notice of intent](#) to publish a funding opportunity announcement to fund clinical trials of rapid-acting interventions that may reduce severe suicide risk. The funding opportunity is due to be published on December 14, 2019.

National Guidelines for Workplace Suicide Prevention

The American Association of Suicidology, the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, and United Suicide Survivors International released [A Report of Findings to Direct the Development of National Guidelines for Workplace Suicide Prevention](#).

Violent Death Surveillance Summary 2016

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention released a [summary](#) of data from the National Violent Death Reporting System. 62.3% of the violent deaths in 2016 were suicides.

Events

December 2019

December 5	Question Persuade Refer (QPR) Suicide Prevention Gatekeeper Training	Register
December 6	Mental Health First Aid	Register
December 7	Stride Against Suicide 5K	Register
December 9	safeTALK	Register
December 10	Question Persuade Refer (QPR) Suicide Prevention Gatekeeper Training	Register
December 10	Resilience: The Biology of Stress and the Science of Hope	Register
December 11	Suicide to Hope	Register
December 12	Introducing Veterans and Service Members to Mindfulness	Register
December 12-13	Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST)	Register
December 13	Mental Health First Aid	Register
December 14	Mental Health First Aid	Register
December 14	Women’s Health Symposium: Maternal Mental Health	Register
December 14	Youth Mental Health First Aid	Register
December 16	Mental Health First Aid	Register
December 16-17	Cognitive Processing Therapy	More information
December 19	Our Duty to Protect: Suicide Prevention for Mental Health Clinicians	Register
December 19	Question Persuade Refer (QPR) Suicide Prevention Gatekeeper Training	Register

January 2020

January 9-10	Recognizing and Responding to Suicide Risk: Essential Skills for Clinicians	Register
January 14-15	Cognitive Behavioral Therapy for Suicide Prevention	Register
January 15	Governor’s Commission on Suicide Prevention	Register
January 16	The Role of Office Design in Burnout	Register
January 18	Mental Health First Aid	Register
January 23	Art-Based Techniques as a Clinical Intervention for Suicidal Clients	Register
January 30	safeTALK	Register

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About MD-SPIN

Maryland's Suicide Prevention and Early Intervention Network (MD-SPIN) provides a continuum of suicide prevention training, resources and technical assistance to advance the development of a comprehensive suicide prevention and early intervention service system for youth and young adults. MD-SPIN will increase the number of youth, ages 10-24, identified, referred and receiving quality behavioral health services, with a focus on serving high risk youth populations (LGBTQ, transition age, veterans and military families, youth with emotional and behavioral concerns) and in target settings (schools, colleges/universities, juvenile services facilities, primary care, emergency departments).

Maryland Behavioral Health Administration Mission

The Maryland Department of Health Behavioral Health Administration will develop an integrated process for planning, policy and services to ensure a coordinated quality system of care is available to individuals with behavioral health conditions. The BHA will, through publicly-funded services and support, promote recovery, resiliency, health and wellness for individuals who have or are at risk for emotional, substance related, addictive and/or psychiatric disorders.

