

Suicide Prevention Month

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September is National Suicide Prevention Month. Suicide is an alarming health crisis across America and an ongoing issue in Kansas. In 2018, suicide was the 9th leading cause of death in the State of Kansas, and the suicide rate increased by 70% from the year 2000 to 2018. In July 2023, the Kansas Department of Health and Environment released an alert to notify healthcare providers of increased emergency visits related to female suicide attempts. In July alone, there were 162 suicide-related occurrences among Kansas females. These eye-opening statistics testify to the importance of observing Suicide Prevention Month and illustrate the urgent need for community action in addressing this health crisis.

Many myths surround suicide, such as the belief that it cannot be prevented. This myth is false. Many suicides can be prevented through asking questions, open conversations, proper mental health treatment, and reducing access to fatal means. In challenging myths like this one, we set the stage to look at the signs and symptoms of suicide, a critical part of suicide prevention.

Paying attention to the warning signs of suicide is the first step in saving lives. A few warning signs include, but are not limited to, isolation from others, engaging in risky activities, changes in sleeping or eating habits, giving away personal items for no reason, and talking about not wanting to be alive. Upon noticing warning signs, early intervention and support are needed.

Fortunately for those in need of support, there are many resources available.

- **988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline**, available 24 hours a day, can be reached by calling or texting 988 or chatting with a counselor online by visiting 988lifeline.org/chat.
- **NAMI Helpline** is available Monday-Friday, 9 A.M. to 9 P.M. CST. The helpline can be reached by calling 1-800-950-NAMI (6264), texting "HelpLine" to 62640, or emailing helpline@nami.org.
- **Crisis Text Line**, available 24 hours a day, can be reached by texting "HOME" to 741741 or visiting www.crisistextline.org.

Although there are ways for those contemplating suicide to get help, they may not seek support due to stigma. Some ways to help reduce the stigma of suicide include using respectful and mindful language when talking about suicide and showing compassion for those struggling. By fostering an environment of understanding and providing support, we can encourage others to reach out and seek the help they need.

Suicide Prevention Month is an opportunity to spread valuable information and resources while working to destigmatize suicide and mental health conversations. Join in engaging

the K-State Research and Extension Stress and Resiliency Team's Suicide Prevention Month campaign, beginning Sept. 1st, by visiting facebook.com/KSRE.Stress.Management. Together, we can make a difference.

This article was adapted from an article originally written by the K-State Research and Extension Stress and Resiliency Team. The main sources of information came from the Kansas Department of Aging and Disability Services, the Kansas Department of Health and Environment, [the Mayo Clinic Health System](#), [Heartland Community Health Center](#), and [SuicideLine Victoria](#). For more information, please contact me at clarawicoff@ksu.edu or 620-365-2242.