

The National Center for Suicide Prevention Training (NCSPT)

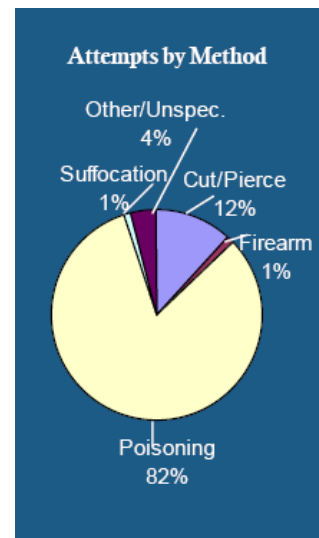
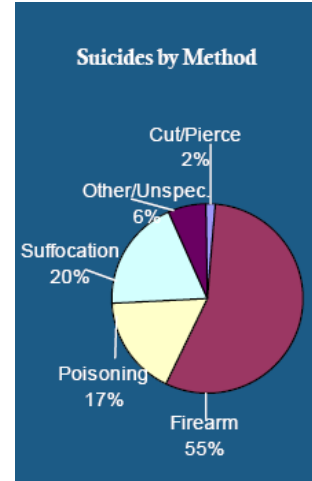
Suicide in the United States

Many may not associate suicide with injury, however, it is a very serious form of intentional injury that causes death and injuries to millions of people.

Every 17 minutes, someone dies by suicide in the United States.¹ On average, there are 83 suicides per day, with 30,451 suicides each year.² Suicide is the 11th leading cause of death in the U.S. In 2001, suicide was the third leading cause of death for those ages 15-24.³

Nationwide, there is an average of 474 attempts at suicide per day.² In 2003, adolescents ages 15-19 had the highest attempt rate in which they had to be hospitalized.²

In 2005, *1.8 million* youth thought about killing themselves. 900,000 of these youth made plans for suicide, while around 712,000 actually attempted suicide.¹



From the Suicide Prevention Research Center²

Suicide prevention gaining more attention

Suicide prevention has gained increased attention among community groups, legislators, and public health organizations. In September 2006, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) awarded \$25.7 million to 46 suicide prevention programs.¹ In 2005, President George W. Bush signed the Garrett Lee Smith Memorial Act into legislation.⁴ This bill provides funding for mental and behavioral health services on college campuses to prevent suicides among college students.⁵ As suicide prevention awareness increases, those in health related fields need to be trained in how to develop and implement suicide prevention programs. Suicide prevention professional training has not kept up with the growth of the overall field.⁶ The issue of suicide is increasingly becoming more recognized as a major public health issue. Suicides are preventable, but many professionals need additional training in order to confidently implement prevention programs.

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Researchers from the Harvard Injury Control Research Center (HICRC) collaborated with professionals from the Education Development Center, Inc. and the Northeast Injury Prevention Network to obtain funding to develop free online training workshops in order to provide professionals with the background and knowledge that they need to develop and implement youth suicide prevention programs and policies. The target audiences for the workshops are public officials, service providers, and community-based coalitions, particularly those in the public health and maternal child health fields.⁶

The researchers first performed a needs assessment to determine what those in the field would like to learn regarding suicide prevention program development. By combining these results with outcomes from a similar CDC needs assessment, the topics for the workshops were decided.⁷

Three workshops were initially developed based on the Public Health Framework. Various professionals contributed their expertise to forming the workshop content and materials. All content and navigation of the workshops were reviewed and pilot tested by outside professionals before they were launched online.^{6,7}

Located at www.ncspt.org, the online training workshops provide a convenient way for professionals to become trained in suicide prevention. The workshops not only provide information on suicide, but they also present the background information necessary to plan state suicide prevention plans and programs, such as basic statistics, planning models, interpreting data, communication strategies, and evaluation methods.⁸

NCSPT Mission:⁶

To provide educational resources to help professionals develop effective suicide prevention programs and policies.

Adults learn best when they are actively involved with the learning process.⁹

The NCSPT online workshops provide participatory activities:⁶

- ◆ Self-assessment quizzes
- ◆ Case studies
- ◆ Slide shows
- ◆ Audio files
- ◆ Links to Internet resources
- ◆ Worksheets to complete in the field.

Learning Objectives for the online workshops:

Workshop #1⁶

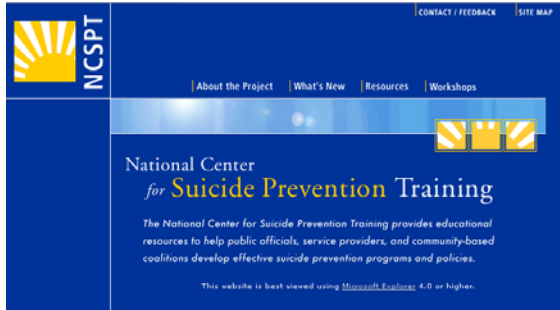
- ◆ Describe the role of data in suicide prevention
- ◆ Describe internationally-accepted coding schemes for suicides and suicide attempts
- ◆ Identify suicide-related data
- ◆ Understand strengths and limitations of data sources
- ◆ Describe the distribution of suicides/attempts in populations
- ◆ Interpret data
- ◆ Describe how to effectively report youth suicide data to decision-makers.

Workshop #2⁶

- ◆ Describe the need for state planning
- ◆ Identify partners
- ◆ Understand community assessment process
- ◆ Select appropriate prevention strategies
- ◆ Describe levels of prevention
- ◆ Write goals using SMART objectives
- ◆ Develop logic model
- ◆ Describe different types of evaluation and outline an evaluation plan and report

Workshop #3⁶

- ◆ Understand the rationale for the gatekeeper system
- ◆ Define suicide prevention terms
- ◆ Identify risk and protective factors for suicide
- ◆ Understand the link between mental health and suicide
- ◆ Identify warning signs
- ◆ Understand how to ask about and respond to suicidal behavior
- ◆ Understand the difference between post-vention and prevention of suicide.



By the time of publication of the researchers' 2005 journal article, 1,258 participants from all 50 U.S. states, Washington, D.C., U.S. territories, and several other countries had used the online workshops.⁶ The workshops have been promoted via email listservs, website links, journal and newspaper articles, visibility at conferences, and word of mouth.⁶

SUCCESS!!

The mean pre- and post- test scores **increased** by 70% for workshop 1, 28% for workshop 2, and 30% for workshop 3!⁶

Between 77% and 100% of those that completed the post-test said they would recommend the workshops to others.⁶

The National Center for Suicide Prevention Training has been ongoing for 5 years. In 2004, they received funding to develop two additional workshops.⁷

The workshops were monitored by how many hits the NCSPT website receives, the number of registrations received, and the numbers of pre-tests, post-tests, and evaluations completed.⁶

The pre- and post- tests as well as evaluation forms that were submitted by users were used to evaluate the outcomes of the online training program. Those that passed the post-test with a 70% or higher received a certificate of acknowledgement. Continuing education credits were also offered to professionals.⁶

Additional evaluation research is needed to determine the impact that this online training program actually has on reducing suicides among youth. Nevertheless, to date, about 1,500 people have participated in the online workshops.⁷ The initial outcome evaluation performed demonstrates that many people are using this form of learning to better implement suicide prevention programs within their communities.

"I will be able to use this information not only in my work doing suicide prevention programming at the state level...I will also use this information in my work in the [Maternal Child Health] program. The principles are very applicable for any public health practitioner."¹⁰

"As a survivor, and yet a physician, the material presented certainly enhances my knowledge of what professionals in the field of suicidology are doing, and on what scientific basis. I think this knowledge will increase my credibility in meeting not only with professionals, but also in being an advocate for suicide awareness..."¹⁰

Suicides and Economic Costs

According to the Suicide Prevention Resource Center, the average medical cost for children and adolescents ages 5-19 is approximately **\$17,000 per completed suicide**, with the average work-loss cost at **\$3,341,954 per case**.²

For hospitalized suicide attempts, the average medical cost for children and adolescents ages 5-19 is **\$13,913 per case**, with an average work-loss cost at **\$22,844 per case**.²

By preventing injuries and death from suicides, society will benefit economically by saving on medical costs, resource costs (police, fire services, property damage), work loss and quality of life costs.

Professional training programs have been found to be effective in increasing the knowledge and confidence of professionals to design, implement, and evaluate suicide prevention programs, yet more needs to be done to determine the cost effectiveness of using them.

Summary

Deborah Stone, the Project Director, and researchers from HICRC and collaborators from the Education Development Center, Inc. have developed an online learning tool to help professionals gain the confidence and knowledge that is needed for them to design, implement, and evaluate successful suicide prevention programs.

They have found that participants have increased their knowledge after completing the online workshops. Based on evaluation forms, participants have commented that they would recommend these workshops to others and that they feel the information could be applied to various public health programs.

Ms. Stone and her colleagues are in the process of developing and testing two additional online workshops. These workshops will address research-based evidence outlining why suicides are preventable, and research-based best practices for preventing youth suicides. Pilot tests of these future workshops will include a participatory component. A facilitator will be present to moderate online discussions. Participants will also be able to post messages on a web board to meet and respond to others in the suicide prevention field.^{6,7} Teleconference sessions will also be tested in a pilot version. In past workshops, small groups had access to interactive facilitated versions of the workshops. Deborah Stone hopes to make this available to more people in these additional two workshops.⁷

Starting in 2004, NCSPT teamed up with the Suicide Prevention Resource Center, based at the Education Development Center, Inc. in Newton, MA, who currently administer and oversee the workshops, while NCSPT continues to develop its new workshops. There is now a link on the Suicide Prevention Resource Center's website to the NCSPT workshops, which will bring more visibility to the program.^{6,7}

Although great strides have been taken in preventing suicides, more research needs to be conducted on the best ways to disseminate successful programs. Nevertheless, providing this free online resource to professionals allows more people to have the opportunity to implement suicide prevention programs, and prevent self-inflicted deaths and injuries.

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