



THE QUESTION



TO PREVENT SUICIDE

Let's Talk

Chesterfield  
Suicide  
Awareness  
& Prevention  
Coalition



# The Tragedy of Suicide

## Facts and Figures Nationally

(Based on 2015 Data from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, CDC)

- In America, one person dies by suicide every 11.9 minutes.
- Americans attempt suicide an estimated one million times annually.
- 90 percent of those who die by suicide had a diagnosable psychiatric disorder at the time of their death (National Center for Health Statistics for 2006).
- In 2015, firearms were the most common method of death by suicide, accounting for almost 50 percent of all suicide deaths, followed by suffocation (including hangings) at 26.8 percent and poisoning at 15.4 percent.
- For every woman who dies by suicide, four men die by suicide; however, women are three times more likely to attempt suicide.
- More than 44,000 Americans die by suicide every year. Suicide is the 10<sup>th</sup> leading cause of death in the U.S. It is the second leading cause of death for children and young adults, ages 10-24, and the fifth leading cause of death for ages 45-49. The suicide rate is 1.8 times the national average for American Indian/Alaska Native adolescents and young adults, ages 15-24.

- Veterans comprise 22.2 percent of suicides (Department of Veteran's Affairs 2012 Suicide Data Report).
- Each year, the combined medical and work loss costs of suicide in the U.S. is \$51 billion.
- The annual impact of suicide in terms of lost year of life is more than 1.5 million years.

## **Facts and Figures for Virginia**

### **(Based on 2015 Data from the CDC)**

- Number of Deaths by Suicide 1,118 – 12.65 victims per 100,000 population. The state is 39<sup>th</sup> in the ranking of suicide deaths in the nation.
- On average in Virginia, one person dies by suicide every eight hours.
- Suicide is the 11<sup>th</sup> leading cause of death overall in Virginia.
- It is the second leading cause of death for young people, ages 15-34, the third for ages 10-14, the fourth for ages 35-54, eighth for ages 55-64 and 16th for ages 65 and older.
- More than three times as many people die by suicide in Virginia annually than by homicide. Total deaths by suicide reflect a total of 21,956 years of potential life lost before age 65.
- Suicide costs Virginia a total of \$1,124,664,000 of combined lifetime medical and work loss cost in 2010, an average of \$1,167,876 per death by suicide.

## ***Suicide: Five Myths by Matthew Nock***

(From *The Washington Post WEEKLY*, May 15, 2016)

“The federal government currently allocates more money to problems like headaches, Lyme disease and Lupus than to suicide, according to the National Institutes of Health; no other leading cause of death (in the United States, it is No. 10) has so little money dedicated to it. The absence of consistent, well-funded, quality research has led to a proliferation of myths about suicide and the people whose lives it claims.”

“Worldwide, more people die from suicide than from wars, genocide and interpersonal violence combined – more than 800,000 every year, according to the World Health Organization.”

## ***Suicide Rates Climb in U.S., Especially Among Adolescent Girls***

By Rae Ellen Bichell, NPR, April 22, 2016.

“While other causes of death are on the decline, suicide just keeps climbing – and it’s doing so for every age group under 75.”

# **Risk Factors for Suicide from the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, AFSP:**

## **Health Factors:**

- Depression
- Substance use disorders
- Bipolar disorder
- Schizophrenia and psychosis
- Personality traits of aggression, mood changes and poor relationships
- Conduct disorder
- Anxiety disorders
- Serious or chronic health condition and/or pain
- Traumatic brain injury
- Smoking

## **Environmental Factors:**

- Access to lethal means, including firearms and drugs
- Prolonged stress, such as harassment, bullying, relationship problems, and unemployment
- Stressful life events, such as a death, divorce, or job loss
- Exposure to another person's suicide or to graphic or sensationalized accounts of suicide

## **Historical Factors:**

- Previous suicide attempts
- Family history of suicide
- Child abuse

## **Warning Signs from AFSP:**

### **If a person talks about:**

- Killing themselves
- Feeling hopeless
- Having no reason to live
- Being a burden to others
- Feeling trapped or in unbearable pain

### **Behaviors that may signal risk, especially if related to a painful event, loss or change.**

- Increased use of alcohol or drugs
- Looking for a way to kill themselves, such as searching online for materials or means
- Withdrawing from activities
- Isolating from family and friends
- Sleeping too little or too much
- Visiting or calling people to say goodbye
- Giving away prized possessions
- Aggression
- Fatigue

### **Displays one or more of the following moods:**

- Depression
- Anxiety
- Loss of interest
- Irritability
- Humiliation
- Agitation
- Rage

## **Community Action to Increase Awareness and Prevention of Suicide:**

### **Chesterfield Suicide Awareness and Prevention Coalition**

Co-Chaired by Melissa Ackley, Chesterfield County Mental Health Support Services, and Jill Weiseman, Family Advocacy Creating Education and Services, FACES. Established in March, 2015.

### **Other member organizations include:**

- Chesterfield Health District
- Chesterfield-Colonial Heights Social Services
- Chesterfield County Public Schools
- National Alliance on Mental Illness of Central VA, NAMI-CVA
- American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, AFSP
- McGuire Veterans Administration Medical Center
- Virginia Department of Veterans Services/Virginia Veteran and Family Support
- Full Circle Grief Center
- Celebrate Recovery
- Beacon Tree Foundation
- Morrisett Community Care
- HCA (Chippenham Hospital and John Randolph Medical Center)

*Our Mission is to increase the coordination of suicide prevention and awareness activities in Chesterfield. Our goal is to educate the public through educational programs, community outreach and media efforts.*

In an attempt to coordinate efforts and more effectively impact the Chesterfield community, the coalition brings together many organizations in the Richmond area who are working to educate citizens about mental illness, the risk and protective factors for suicide, and the support resources within our community. Our goal is to reduce the fears and stigma associated with mental health conditions and increase people's comfort with reaching out for help. By educating our citizens, we are widening the safety net in our community so that people who are struggling and contemplating suicide are more likely to cross paths with people who can recognize the warning signs and connect them with appropriate help.

The Coalition is presenting its educational program, *Raise Your Voice about Suicide Prevention*, to religious, civic, educational and other groups in Chesterfield County. For more information, contact Jill Weiseman at 804-378-0035.



## **Suicide Prevention Across the Lifespan Plan for the Commonwealth of Virginia:**

(See [www.viginiapreventionworks.org/suicide-prevention-across-the-lifespan-for-the-commonwealth-of-virginia](http://www.viginiapreventionworks.org/suicide-prevention-across-the-lifespan-for-the-commonwealth-of-virginia).)

The Chesterfield Suicide Awareness and Prevention Coalition, either as a group or by the work of its member organizations, addresses the following goals of this plan:

**Goal 1:** Integrate and coordinate suicide prevention activities across multiple sectors and settings.

**Goal 2:** Increase communication efforts conducted online that promote positive messages and support safe crisis intervention strategies.

**Goal 3:** Increase knowledge of the factors that offer protection from suicidal behaviors and that promote wellness and recovery.

**Goal 4:** Promote responsible media reporting of suicide, accurate portrayals of suicide and mental illnesses in the entertainment industry and the safety of online content related to suicide.

**Goal 10:** Provide care and support to individuals affected by suicide deaths and attempts to promote healing and implement community strategies to help prevent further suicides.

## **Other Suicide Prevention Initiatives:**

### **Chesterfield County Public Schools**

- *Signs of Suicide* curriculum in 7<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grades
- Positive Behavioral Supports Program
- School staff trained to recognize suicide risk factors in students
- School counselors, psychologists, social workers and nurses trained to assess for level of suicide risk in students and to connect with parents and mental health providers to develop a plan of support
- Annual parent education presentation “Safeguarding Youth” to include risk and protective factors for depression and suicide, how to have constructive conversations with your children on these topics and where to turn for help with these treatable conditions

**Outreach to Veterans and their Families – Veteran’s Crisis Line** for veterans or someone concerned about a veteran offers same day access for help, *Coaching into Care* and telephone advice for families. **Call 1-800-273-8255 and press 1.**

**Pediatric and Adolescent Health Partners in Midlothian** has instituted screenings for suicide at patient check-ups, with parent permission.

## **What can you do as a concerned member of the community?**

You are more likely to encounter someone – a friend, family member, co-worker, neighbor, or member of the community – in an emotional or mental crisis than someone having a heart attack.

**Chesterfield Mental Health Support Services** offers the following programs to help you to recognize and respond to these situations. Call 804-768-7212 for information about how to register or how to schedule a training for your Chesterfield organization.

- **safeTALK** –Half-day program teaches how to identify people who may have thoughts of suicide, how to ask them directly about the possibility of suicide, and then how to connect them with life-saving resources. safeTALK’s proven, easy-to-follow steps are used worldwide.
- **Adult Mental Health First Aid** –Training teaches a five-step action plan to offer initial help to people with the signs and symptoms of a mental illness or in a crisis and connect them with the appropriate professional, peer, social or self-help care.

- **Youth Mental Health First Aid** – Uses the five-step action plan with information that is tailored to the ways that signs and symptoms may present themselves in young people, ages 12-18. Most appropriate for adults who work with young people of these ages.
- **Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST)** – A two-day intensive, interactive and practice-dominated course designed to help caregivers recognize risks for suicide, intervene to prevent immediate harm and link persons at risk to the next level of care. ASIST is for all caregivers and is especially appropriate for school counselors, psychologists, social workers, administrators, nurses, case workers, police, correctional or juvenile justice staff, soldiers, organizations working with military/veterans, social service staff, foster care staff, clergy, advocates for elderly and all ‘natural helpers’ who work in the field of human service, regardless of the population served.

## **Mental Health as a Factor in Suicide:**

- 90 percent of those who die by suicide had a diagnosable psychiatric disorder at the time of their death.

### ***Virginia is No. 38 in Mental Health America Ranking***

By Sarah Kleiner, *Richmond Times Dispatch*, October 25, 2016.

“Mental Health America downgraded Virginia to 38<sup>th</sup> among states in its overall category, which takes into consideration the prevalence of mental illness among residents and their ability to access care.”

“Only one out of four Virginia youth suffering from major depression is treated – a rate that falls below all but two other states, according to Mental Health America’s annual rankings of mental health systems across the country.”

## **Organizations that Provide Support and Resources for Persons with a Mental Health Illness and their Families:**

**Chesterfield Mental Health Support Services – Same Day Access**

**Access Services** provides intake, information and referral, financial screening and initial assessment services to all people seeking clinical services. This includes all individuals seeking Child and Adolescent Services, Adult Mental Health Services, Psychiatric Rehabilitation Services and Substance Use Services. Individuals initially access the program by calling Intake at 768-7318. If appropriate for any of these clinical services, individuals can then come in for an initial appointment at any convenient time, Monday through Thursday, 8:30 to 5:00, and Friday 8:30 to 2:00. Consumers seek services for a wide range of problems in living, including need for case management services, psychiatric medications, and individual and family counseling.

**Family Advocacy Creating Education and Services,**

**FACES:** Founded in memory of Justin Myers who died by suicide at the age of 20. For more information, go to <http://www.facesva.org/>.

- Twice monthly group meetings for people who have a loved one with a mental health illness or brain disorder to provide support and information. Free and open to the public.
- Monthly community education meetings with speakers from the mental health and related fields. Free and open to the public.
- Community outreach projects.
- Support of research in the mental health field.

**National Alliance on Mental Illness of Central Virginia,**

**NAMI-CVA:** Provides mental health education, support and advocacy. For more information, go to

<http://namicentralvirginia.org/>.

- Speakers with expertise in mental illness and related community services.
- Support groups, classes, and programs for people living with mental illnesses.
- Family support groups.
- **Parents and Teachers as Allies** presentation to educate school personnel about students experiencing mental health challenges and how to partner with their families.
- Community events to raise awareness.

**Beacon Tree Foundation:** A non-profit youth mental health organization founded in 2008 by Tom and Diana Leahy. For more information, go to

<http://beacontree.org/>.

- **Operation OnRamp** – Providing youth access to mental health care.
- Family Grant Program – Gap funding for mental health treatment up to age 21.
- **ASQ Suicide Screening** – Implementation of this screening tool in primary care and pediatric practices.
- **Prevention Drug Prevention Intervention** – Life skills training.
- Presentations and tabling events to educate the community on mental health.

**Celebrate Recovery:** Provides a safe place to find healing from life's hurts, hang-ups, and habits through the 12 Steps and 8 Recovery Principles. Programs nightly throughout the week. For more information, contact [CelebrateRecovery@SouthsideChurchVA.org](mailto:CelebrateRecovery@SouthsideChurchVA.org).

- Lessons, personal testimony or special guest speakers for adults and teens.
- Lessons, music, activities and games for children.
- Gender specific, issue-based small groups.
- Great fellowship, great coffee and great snacks.

### **Goals of all of these Programs:**

- Reduce stigma associated with mental health illness.
- Increase comfort of those seeking help for mental health concerns.
- Facilitate access to mental health services.
- Advance the perspective of mental health as health.
- Communicate that treatment is available and recovery is possible.



## **Survivors of a Loss by Suicide:**

People who have lost a loved one to a death by suicide may find the grieving process to be more challenging. It is important that they take care of their physical and emotional well-being and find support to help them in the grieving process. **The survivors of a loss by suicide have an increased risk of suicide, but there are ways to reduce the risk.**

## **Recommendations for the Survivors of a loss by suicide:**

- Give yourself time to grieve at your own pace, healing takes time and patience.
- Take care of yourself – eat nutritiously, get sleep and exercise.
- Seek professional help.
- Learn about suicide loss.
- Connect with other suicide loss survivors.

## **Resources in the Community for Survivors**

### **Support Groups:**

Participating in a support group will help you know that you are not alone. You can learn about healing from others who may be at different stages in their grieving.

**National Alliance on Mental Illness of Central Virginia,  
NAMI-CVA, Survivors of Suicide Loss Support Group**

**What:** Family members or friends who have lost someone to suicide can connect with fellow survivors and receive support. New members may join the group at any time.

**When:** First Thursday, every month. 7 pm.

**Where:** Monument Heights Baptist Church, 5716 Monument Ave., Richmond, Va.

**Who:** Contact Alane Miles, 804-281-0451, ext. 1209 or by email at [Alane.Miles@americanhospice.com](mailto:Alane.Miles@americanhospice.com). Or call NAMI-CVA at 804-285-1749.

**Full Circle Suicide Loss Group**

**What:** For adults grieving the death of a loved one by suicide, including group discussion and support, creative expression and sharing of resources. Participants must complete the registration process prior to attending.

**When:** See Full Circle's website for the dates of future groups.

**Where:** Full Circle Grief Center, 10611 Patterson Ave., Suite 201, Richmond, Va.

**Who:** Contact Maryse Eubank at 804-912-2947, ext. 114 or [maryse@fullcirclegc.org](mailto:maryse@fullcirclegc.org).

### **Morrissett Community Care Survivor of Suicide Loss Support Group**

**What:** Have you lost a friend or family member to a death by suicide? This group welcomes new members at any time.

**When:** Fourth Thursday, every month. 7 – 9 pm.

**Where:** Chippenham Hospital, fourth floor Cardiac Conference Room in the Levinson Heart Hospital, 7101 Jahnke Road, Richmond, Va.

**Who:** Contact Mary Lou at 804-275-7828 or 804-347-7378.

### **AFSP Survivors of Suicide Loss Support Group**

**What:** The goal for the group is to provide a safe grieving environment, free of stigma and judgement. It is a forum to connect with other community members suffering from a suicide loss in a place of emotional support. New members may join the group at any time.

**When:** Third Thursday, every month. 6:30 – 8 pm.

**Where:** Pusey House at First Baptist Church, 2705 Park Ave., Richmond, Va.

**Who:** Contact Ren Bell at 804-548-6670 or [renbrooke@gmail.com](mailto:renbrooke@gmail.com).

## **International Survivors of Suicide Loss Day**

In 1999, Senator Harry Reid introduced a resolution to establish a National Survivors of Suicide Day. Senator Reid's father died by suicide. People in other countries began observing the day in their communities, so it was renamed International Survivors of Suicide Day.

**International Survivors of Suicide Loss Day is commemorated annually on the Saturday before Thanksgiving.**

Each year, the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, AFSP, along with other organizations, sponsors International Survivors of Suicide Loss Day events to bring people together to remember their loved ones and to give each other support.

For more information and to register, go to [Afsp.org/SuicideLoss](http://Afsp.org/SuicideLoss).

### **Out of the Darkness Community Walks:**

AFSP sponsors many of these events in communities throughout Virginia to support those who have lost a loved one and to raise awareness in the community.

To find dates of walks in your community and to register, go to [Afsp.org/Walks](http://Afsp.org/Walks).

**If you have questions or would like more information, please contact the Chesterfield Suicide Awareness and Prevention Coalition by calling (804) 378-0035.**

**If you or someone you know is exhibiting any signs of suicidal thinking, seek help immediately by contacting any of these free, 24/7/365 resources:**

- **Chesterfield County Mental Health Support Services/Crisis Intervention at 804-748-6356**
- **The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-TALK (8255)**
- **The Suicide Crisis Text Line, text HOME to 741-741**

**The Veterans Crisis Line connects veterans in crisis and their families and friends with qualified, caring Department of Veterans Affairs' responders through these confidential, 24/7/365, free resources:**

- **Call 1-800-273-8255 and Press 1**
- **Send a text message to 838255**
- **Access TTY service at 1-800-799-4889**