

The Tragedy of Suicide

Facts and Figures Nationally

(Based on 2017 Data from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, unless otherwise indicated)

- On average, there are 129 suicides per day.
- Suicide is the tenth leading cause of death in the U.S.
- Suicide rates went up more than 30% in half of states since 1999.
- There were an estimated 1,400,000 suicide attempts in 2017.
- In 2017, the number of deaths by suicide was 47,173 Americans. This is a rate of 14.0 per 100,000 people.
- Firearms accounted for 50.57% of all suicide deaths.
- Men died by suicide 3.54 times more often than women.
- White males accounted for 69.67% of suicide deaths in 2017. The rate of suicide is highest in middle-age white men.
- The rate of suicide was 1.8 times higher among female Veterans than non-Veteran adult women and 1.4 times higher among male Veterans than non-Veteran adult men. Firearms were the means used in 69% of all Veteran suicide deaths. (Department of Veteran's Affairs 2016 Suicide Data Report).
- Suicide accounts for about 20% of postpartum deaths. (JAMA Psychiatry, May, 2013)

- In 2015, suicide and self-injury cost the U.S. \$69,000,000,000.
- The annual impact of suicide in terms of lost years of life is more than 1.5 million years.

Facts and Figures for Virginia

(Based on 2017 Data from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)

- On average in Virginia, one person dies by suicide every seven hours.
- Suicide is the 11th leading cause of death in Virginia.
- The number of deaths by suicide is 1,179. This is a rate of 13.2 per 100,000 people. The state is 41st in the ranking of suicide deaths by state in the nation.
- Suicide is the second leading cause of death for young people, ages 15-34, the fourth for ages 35-54, the eighth for ages 55-64, and the sixteenth for ages 65 and older.
- More than four times as many people died by suicide in Virginia in 2017 than in alcohol related motor vehicle accidents. Deaths by suicide reflect a total of 23,962 years of potential life lost before age 65.
- Deaths by suicide cost Virginia a total of \$1,124,664,000 combined lifetime medical and work loss cost in 2010, an average of \$1,167,876 per suicide death.

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.”

U.S. Youth Suicide Rate Reaches 20-Year High

From *U.S. News and World Report*, June 18, 2019

“Suicides among teens have especially spiked, with an annual percentage change of 10% between 2014 and 2017 for 15 to 19-year-olds, researchers said.”

“‘It really is an unprecedented surge,’ said lead author Oren Miron, a research associate at Harvard Medical School in Boston. ‘You can go back decades and you won’t find such a sharp increase.’”

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

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-Colonial Heights Social Services
- Chesterfield County Public Schools
- National Alliance on Mental Illness of Central VA, NAMI-CVA
- American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, Virginia Chapter, AFSP Virginia
- McGuire Veterans Administration Medical Center
- Full Circle Grief Center
- Celebrate Recovery
- Beacon Tree Foundation
- Morrisett Community Care
- HCA (Chippenham and John Randolph)
- Allison's Reach Foundation
- John Tyler Community College
- Side by Side
- Mayor's and Governor's Challenge to Prevent Suicide Among Service Members and Veterans
- Robin's Hope
- Cameron K Gallagher Foundation

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 faith-based, civic, educational, and other groups in Chesterfield County. For more information, contact Jill Weiseman at facesorg1@verizon.net.

From Office of the Chief Medical Examiner 2017 Report

The rate of deaths by suicide in Chesterfield was 15.7 per 100,000, compared to a rate of 13.2 for the state.

Lock and Talk Virginia:

Lock and Talk Virginia is part of a comprehensive approach to suicide prevention in Chesterfield County being implemented by the Chesterfield Suicide Awareness and Prevention Coalition in partnership with Chesterfield County Mental Health Support Services. Limiting access to lethal means by locking them or removing them for a person in crisis is an essential strategy for preventing suicide. Reduce easy access by locking or removing potentially dangerous items, including firearms, medications, alcohol, or any other item that may pose a threat.

Talking about suicide can save lives, reduce stigma, and encourage help-seeking behaviors. If someone you care about shows warning signs of suicide, ask the question, “Are you thinking suicide?” Then, show you care by helping to connect them with safety resources.

Find more information at
chesterfield.gov/preventsuicide

From Office of the Chief Medical Examiner 2017 Report

- 64.6% of gun-related deaths in Virginia were by suicide.
- 664 persons in Virginia, including 195 persons in Central Virginia, died by gun-related suicide.
- 19 children died by gun-related suicide in Virginia which is 47.5% of child suicide deaths.

Suicide Prevention Across the Lifespan Plan 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 6: Promote efforts to reduce access to lethal means of suicide among individuals with identified suicide risk.

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 7th and 10th 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

Emotionally Naked, started in memory of Charles Aubrey Rogers by his mother, Anne Moss Rogers, is a blog/website that links people to resources and support. Anne Moss Rogers is an author, public speaker, and registered trainer on the topic of suicide alertness. Her blog features thought leaders on subjects about mental illness, addiction, suicide, and grief. For more information, go to <https://annemoss.com/>.

- Share your story
- Join a virtual event
- Schedule a speaking or training event

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

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.

From Living Works Suicide Intervention Training:

“Everyone in the community has an important role to play. Imagine if we could surround the person in crisis with people who are trained to recognize the signs of suicide, intervene, get them the help they need to stay safe, and eventually thrive.”

Mental Health as a Factor in Suicide:

According to the Treatment Advocacy Center's review of recent studies, untreated mental illness is a significant factor contributing to the rising rates of suicide in the United States. Their review concludes that reversing this trend will require ensuring timely and effective treatment for individuals with mental illness.

Virginia is 33rd in 2019 Ranking by Mental Health America

From Mental Health America of Virginia:

- Virginia improved in the overall rankings to 33rd, up from 40th.
- Youth mental health rankings improved to 23rd overall, after three years scoring between 45th and 47th.
- Overall adult ranking was the worst in 4 years, down to 35th from 23rd last year.
- Overall access to care in Virginia continued to be low at 40th among all states. This ranking includes access to insurance and treatment, quality and cost of insurance, access to special education, and workforce availability.
- Virginia is 41st in access to a trained mental health workforce.

From National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI):

- Early treatment of mental illness is essential.
- 50% of all lifetime cases of mental illness begin by age 14 and 75% by age 24.
- The average delay between onset of symptoms and intervention is eight to ten years.
- The delay in treatment can allow symptoms to worsen and outcomes to be diminished.

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

Chesterfield Mental Health Support Services – Same Day 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, was 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, free of cost
- Support groups, classes, and programs for people living with mental illnesses, free of cost
- Family support groups, free of cost
- **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 is 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, go to 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

Robin's Hope helps adults overcome traumatic life events and toxic stress through building hope, resilience, and social connection. New people can join at any time. Your struggles matter, and we can get through it together. For information and a list of groups and events, go to <https://robinshope.com/services/>.

- Support groups at no cost, facilitated by both licensed, trained counselors and peer specialists with lived experience of trauma
- Family friendly social activities
- Community education and resource tabling events

Goals of all 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

Other Community Partners:

Allison's Reach Foundation seeks to raise awareness of Perinatal Mood and Anxiety Disorders and assist new mothers who may be experiencing this debilitating disorder. Contact the foundation at Allisonsreach@gmail.com.

From Postpartum Support International:

- Up to one in five women will suffer from a maternal mental health disorder like postpartum depression.
- Less than 15% of women receive treatment.
- Maternal mental health disorders impact the whole family, not just mothers.
- One in ten dads will experience a perinatal mental health disorder.

John Tyler Community College (JTCC) has two campuses located in Chesterfield County (Chester and Midlothian). Though the college does not offer counseling and psychological services, the Tyler Care Team has been established to offer students supportive services on campus and to connect students to college and community resources when needed. The Care Team is made of individuals from the Dean of Students office, Accessibility Services, and Safety and Security. The team works with teaching faculty and student services on campus to support students' academic success. For additional information, contact Ms. Michelle Spencer, Associate Dean of Students at Mspencer@jtcc.edu.

Side by Side provides support for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and questioning youth ages 11-20 in the Richmond area. LGBTQ+ youth die by suicide at nearly four times the rate of their heterosexual peers. Services include:

- Support Groups
- Drop-In Hours
- Counseling Services
- Case Management
- Housing Resources
- Youth Support Line – 888-644-4390

Find additional information at sidebysideva.org.

Cameron K Gallagher Foundation's mission is to fulfill Cameron's dream and legacy by being a positive force that works to cultivate awareness and understanding of teenage depression and anxiety. For more information, go to <https://www.ckgfoundation.org/>

- Raise awareness of teen mental health to erase stigma
- Educate in mainstream environments to provide support and tools for teens and their influencers.
- Prioritize mental health to inspire conversation and care

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.

Full Circle Suicide Loss Group

What: Support group 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 <http://www.fullcirclegc.org/> 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.

Survivors of Suicide Loss Support Group RVA

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: Co-facilitated by Shirley Ramsey and Anne Moss Rogers. Contact Shirley Ramsey at 804-868-0082 or shoreynam@gmail.com. Go to survivorsofsuicidelossrva.wordpress.com/ for more information.

Morrissett Community Care Survivor of Suicide Grief Support Group (SOS)

This group is for those who have lost a loved one to suicide. Date, time, and Chesterfield location to be determined. To register, contact Greg Webber at 804-275-7828.

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, and it was renamed International Survivors of Suicide Loss 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 survivorday@afsp.org.

Healing Conversations

This AFSP program gives those who have lost someone to suicide the opportunity to talk to an experienced volunteer who is a survivor of suicide loss and can provide understanding and guidance.

For more information, go to healingconversations@afsp.org.

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 walks@afsp.org.

Uniting for Suicide Postvention

Suicide prevention is a commonly used and understood term. However, not everyone recognizes suicide postvention. Suicide postvention builds upon prevention efforts by providing immediate and ongoing support to those impacted by a suicide loss.

Postvention is critical for healing after a loss by suicide. Uniting for Suicide Postvention (USPV) provides resources and support for **everyone** touched by suicide loss.

For more information, go to <https://www.mirecc.va.gov/visn19/postvention/>.

You are Not Alone

If you have questions or would like more information, please contact the Chesterfield Suicide Awareness and Prevention Coalition by emailing facesorg1@verizon.net.

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/Military Crisis Line connects all current or former military members 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**
- **Chat online at <https://www.veteranscrisisline/>**
- **Access TTY service at 1-800-799-4889**