

100% Preventable: September is
Suicide Prevention Awareness Month

September is Suicide Prevention Awareness month and an opportunity to recognize the impact of suicide on our population. In 2015, Colorado lost 1,093 individuals to suicide: this is nearly double the number of people who lost their life due to an automobile accident, significantly more than lives lost in homicides, and an increase over 2014 numbers. Our state ranks 7th in the nation for suicidal deaths and given the gravity of this statistic, many resources are focused on this serious and preventable public health issue.

Males continue to carry a disproportionate burden for suicide in Colorado, accounting for over three-quarters of suicide deaths. By contrast, females make more attempts on their lives.

It is estimated that for each suicide death, approximately 25 individuals are intimately and significantly affected by the loss. In Colorado, that would translate to over 27,000 bereaved in 2015 alone.

Dr. Barbara Becker, Deputy Director of AllHealth Network, a member of the Colorado Commission on Suicide Prevention and participant in the statewide "Zero Suicide" initiative, shared some critical information on signs of suicide and depression.

"Suicide leaves many family members and friends heartbroken, often with unanswered questions. It is important to not accept these lives lost to suicide as inevitable," Dr. Becker said.

"We need to recognize what we as individuals can do to prevent these deaths," she added.

It is important to learn the warning signs of suicide. The following are some of the indicators that may mean a person is at risk for suicide:

- Talking about wanting to die
- Talking about feeling hopeless
- Talking about being a burden to others
- Withdrawing or becoming isolated
- Increased access to lethal means
- Behaving recklessly
- Increased use of drugs or alcohol
- Giving away prized possessions

Taking the time to learn these warning signs is the first step to assisting someone who is struggling. The next step is to reach out to that individual to let them know you care:

- Ask them if they are wanting to take their own life
- Listen without judgment

- Persuade them to get help
- Assist them in getting help
- Do not leave them alone

If you are unable to get them into a safe place and you believe they will self-harm, call 911.

Anyone can make a difference by paying attention to the behavior of loved ones, friends, and colleagues. Everyone needs to be willing to assist them if they are struggling. Everyone needs to know where the resources are and assist other with accessing resources. Equally important, everyone needs to be willing to ask for help when struggling. With help comes hope.

Everyone has the power to bring that hope to another individual and, in the process, might just save a life.

If you or someone you know is in need of support, please contact the Colorado Crisis Support line available 24 hours per day at 1-844-493-TALK (8255), or text "TALK" to 38255, or to chat online visit <http://coloradocrisiservices.org>