This Suicide Prevention Month, we are reaching out to those who are struggling and remembering those we've lost. It is also a time for us to collectively recommit to preventing suicide over the long term. While September’s efforts are important, they are a sprint compared to the marathon it will take to significantly reduce suicide rates. That may sound discouraging, but there is hope. We know that suicide can be prevented, most recently through the national outcomes evaluation[1] of the Garrett Lee Smith Youth Suicide Prevention Program. In counties where grantees were implementing a comprehensive array of strategies, youth suicide deaths and attempts decreased—that’s the good news. The bad news is that this impact disappeared after federal grant funding ended. We need a stronger national foundation to keep prevention efforts consistent and lasting across the country. A key part of that foundation is state suicide prevention infrastructure.

Just as we need paved roads and safe bridges for our economy to thrive, we also need a strong state foundation to support effective suicide prevention in communities across the country. State infrastructure allows states to support local prevention efforts, help respond after a suicide, connect community prevention efforts, channel federal and state resources to where they are needed most, and much more. Without strong infrastructure, there is little chance of sustaining the coordinated, multifaceted effort that’s needed across each state to reduce suicide in our country.

Since the first National Strategy for Suicide Prevention in 2001, we have made some progress in building that foundation. All states have a state suicide prevention plan, and an increasing number of states have legislation and at least some state-level staff to support their plan’s implementation. While these initial steps are important, much more remains to be done. Too often, there is just one person—or no designated individual—trying to update the state plan, support community prevention efforts, negotiate with public and private partners to improve coordination and care, respond to media requests, and report back to state officials and residents. These state suicide prevention coordinators are making heroic efforts, but they often lack the authority, support, and resources to do their job effectively.

So what does it take to establish infrastructure that can really support effective suicide prevention across each state? SPRC just launched the first-ever national State Suicide Prevention Infrastructure Recommendations[2].
which encourages state leaders to:

- **Authorize** - Designate a lead division or organization for suicide prevention in the state, and give it the resources and authority to carry out all of the recommendations.
- **Lead** - Maintain a dedicated leadership position, as well as core staff positions and capacity, in order to carry out the recommendations and create cross-agency and cross-sector collaboration within the state government.
- **Partner** - Ensure a broad, inclusive public-private partnership or coalition at the state level with a shared vision and commitment to suicide prevention.
- **Examine** - Support high-quality suicide data collection at the state and local levels to inform and evaluate prevention efforts.
- **Build** - Create a multi-faceted lifespan approach to suicide prevention across the state, and allocate sufficient resources to fully implement and evaluate it.
- **Guide** - Support all state, county, and local efforts in the planning, execution, and evaluation of their efforts, including allocation of needed resources.

This Suicide Prevention Month, we invite you to consider how you can follow [this blueprint](http://www.sprc.org/state-infrastructure) to push for a stronger suicide prevention infrastructure in your state. Use [this checklist](http://www.sprc.org/sites/default/files/SPRC-State%20Infrastructure-Summary-Checklist.pdf) to consider how your state measures up to the recommendations. To find out more about what’s going on in your state, visit [SPRC’s state pages](http://www.sprc.org/states) and [AFSP’s state fact sheets](http://www.sprc.org/stateInfrastructure/tools). Sign up for our new [mailing list](https://lp.constantcontact.com/su/l69fksv) to stay up to date on the latest tools and information for building state infrastructure. Consider which state leaders or key influencers you could share these recommendations with. How is your professional association or organization promoting state suicide prevention infrastructure? How can you build these recommendations into your conversations with decision-makers who can influence state infrastructure? Together, we can help build a stronger foundation for lasting state and local efforts that can help us reduce suicide across the country.

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**Links within this resource**
