

Suicide – A Serious Public Health Problem

8/05 summary

The President's New Freedom Commission on Mental Health, Final Report July 2003

Goals in a Transformed Mental Health System...

- **Goal 1:** Americans understand that Mental Health is essential to overall health.
- **Goal 2:** Mental Health care is consumer and family driven.
- **Goal 3:** Disparities in Mental Health services are eliminated.
- **Goal 4:** Early Mental Health screening, assessment, and referral to services are common practice.
- **Goal 5:** Excellent Mental Health Care is delivered and research is accelerated.
- **Goal 6:** Technology is used to access Mental Health care and information.

National Strategy for Suicide Prevention: Goals and Objectives for Action, 2001

From the preface by (then) Surgeon General David Satcher:

“Suicide exacts an enormous toll from the American people. Our Nation loses 30,000 lives to this tragedy each year, another 650,000 receive emergency care after attempting to take their own lives. The devastating trauma, loss, and suffering is multiplied in the lives of family members and friends.... Keep in mind that the National Strategy for Suicide Prevention is not the Surgeon General’s strategy or the Federal government’s strategy; rather, it is the strategy of the American people for improving their health and well-being through the prevention of suicide....”

- **Goal 1:** Promote awareness that suicide is a public health problem that is preventable
- **Goal 2:** Develop broad-based support for suicide prevention
- **Goal 3:** Develop and implement strategies to reduce the stigma associated with being a consumer of mental health, substance abuse and suicide prevention services
- **Goal 4:** Develop and implement community-based suicide prevention programs
- **Goal 5:** Promote efforts to reduce access to lethal means and methods of self-harm
- **Goal 6:** Implement training for recognition of at-risk behavior and delivery of effective treatment
- **Goal 7:** Develop and promote effective clinical and professional practices
- **Goal 8:** Improve access to and community linkages with mental health and substance abuse services.
- **Goal 9:** Improve reporting and portrayals of suicidal behavior, mental illness and substance abuse in the entertainment and news media
- **Goal 10:** Promote and support research on suicide and suicide prevention
- **Goal 11:** Improve and expand surveillance systems

Healthy People 2010

The Leading Health Indicators will be used to measure the health of the Nation over the next 10 years. Each of the 10 Leading Health Indicators has one or more objectives from Healthy People 2010 associated with it. As a group, the Leading Health Indicators reflect the major health concerns in the United States at the beginning of the 21st century. The Leading Health Indicators were selected on the basis of their ability to motivate action, the availability of data to measure progress, and their importance as public health issues. The Leading Health Indicators are—

- Physical Activity
- Overweight and Obesity
- Tobacco Use
- Substance Abuse
- Responsible Sexual Behavior
- **Mental Health**
- Injury and Violence
- Environmental Quality
- Immunization
- **Access to Health Care**

National Vital Statistics Reports, National Center for Health Statistics
(2003 information will be available in October 2005.)

Year	US Total	US rate per 100,000 population	Kansas Total	Kansas Rate per 100,000 population
1990	30,906	12.4	297	12.0
1991	30,810	12.2	310	12.4
1992	30,484	12.0	311	12.4
1993	31,102	12.1	336	13.3
1994	31,142	12.0	292	11.4
1995	31,284	11.9	291	11.3
1996	30,903	11.6	334	13.0
1997	30,535	11.4	320	12.3
1998	30,575	11.3	325	12.4
1999	29,199	10.7	299	11.3
2000	29,350	10.7	325	12.2
2001	30,622	10.8	293	10.8
2002	31,655	11.0	345	12.7
2003			344	12.7

In the US in 2002, suicide was the 3rd leading cause of death of 15-24 year olds, following accidents and homicide.

American Association of Suicidology – 2002 National Information
(2003 information will be available in October 2005.)

Deaths by suicide:

- Every 16.6 minutes, one person
- Every 1 hour 34.7 minutes, one person 65 or older
- Every 2 hours 3 minutes, one person 24 or younger
- Making suicide the 11th leading cause of death (with homicide ranking as the 14th)
- The number of deaths of males is 4.1 times the number for females

Suicide attempts:

- Estimate that the number of attempts is 25 times the number of deaths, resulting in 765,000 attempts per year
- For younger people, estimate that the number of attempts is 100-200 times the number of deaths
- Approximately 5 million living Americans have attempted suicide
- The number of attempts by females is 3 times the number by males

Survivors of suicide loss – family and friends who lost a loved one to suicide

- Each death intimately affects at least 6 other people
- Based on the numbers of deaths by suicide from 1978 through 2002, the number of survivors is estimated at 4.47 million – 1 of every 64 Americans

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) 2003 Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance Survey (YRBSS)

A representative sample of 9-12 graders from across the U.S. reported that they had experienced the following with the 12 months before taking the survey:

- 26.8% had felt so sad or hopeless everyday for at least two weeks in a row that they stopped doing some usual activities
- 16.9% had seriously considered attempting suicide
- 16.5% had made a plan to attempt suicide
- 8.5% had attempted suicide one or more times
- 2.9% had made a suicide attempt that resulted in an injury, poisoning, or overdose that had to be treated by a doctor or nurse

Kansas Department of Health Center for Health and Environmental Statistics reports:
(2004 information will be available in November 2005.)

In Kansas in 2002:

- The most common single *external* cause of death was motor vehicle deaths (547) followed by suicide (346).
- Unintentional injury and violent deaths accounted for nearly 50 (49.2) percent of deaths for those 1-44 years of age.
- Suicide was the 5th leading cause of death of 5-14 year olds, the 2nd leading cause for 15-24 year olds and the third for 25-44 year olds.

Child and Young Adult Deaths by Suicide in Kansas

Year	Total	5-14 year olds	15-24 year olds
1999	298	5	55
2000	331	3	50
2001	297	2	62
2002	346	3	62
2003	344	<i>less than 6</i>	43

Douglas County, Kansas with a population of less than 100,000 has reported that of the deaths that occurred in our county, the following numbers were attributed to suicide

- 1994 - 6
- 1995 - 3
- 1996 - 3
- 1997 - 11
- 1998 - 9
- 1999 - 10
- 2000 - 5
- 2001 - 11
- 2002 - 9
- 2003 - 10
- 2004 - 10 (per Coroner's office)

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*member of National Hopeline Network 1/800/SUICIDE,
and National Suicide Prevention Lifeline 1/800/273-TALK*