In Wyoming, which has one of the highest suicide rates in the country, approximately 80 percent of suicide deaths occur among men, a quarter of whom are middle aged. Factors that may account for these elevated rates include a culture of self-reliance that discourages help-seeking, limited access to mental health care, high rates of substance abuse, and firearm ownership. Over the past 15 years, Wyoming has had the highest rate of suicide by firearm of any state in the country; however, a majority of the population in the state do not believe that reducing access to guns would reduce suicide rates. Suicide prevention efforts implemented in the state have included public awareness campaigns; firearm safety measures such as the distribution of gun locks; and a statewide rollout of Question, Persuade, Refer (QPR) training. The impact of these interventions on suicide rates is so far unclear.

Mark Russler, the executive director of Yellowstone Behavioral Health Center, a community mental health program in Cody, is working with colleagues to pilot test Brief Intensive Therapy, a program that provides suicidal individuals with targeted, family-centered therapy on an outpatient basis, thereby avoiding long hospital stays. He said that one of the greatest challenges is reaching those at highest risk: “When we can get people to us, to treatment, they usually do well. The people committing suicide, they’re the ones we’re not seeing.”

**Spark Extra!** Check out these suicide prevention resources related to men [2].

Links within this resource

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