Tennessee’s Statewide Suicide Prevention Network

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The Tennessee Suicide Prevention Network (TSPN) [1] is an independent nonprofit organization that is housed within Mental Health America of the MidSouth [2] and has regional staff across the state. TSPN provides leadership for suicide prevention in Tennessee and administrative backing for a statewide coalition called the Advisory Council [3], which is responsible for oversight of the Tennessee Strategy for Suicide Prevention [4].

The Advisory Council follows bylaws [5] that ensure its membership includes loss and attempt survivors, health care workers, K-12 professionals, justice system professionals, and people from other fields. The Advisory Council bylaws serve as a key document to which members commit in order to ensure effective participation and division of activities across the state.

The bylaws also require that the Advisory Council includes three representatives from each of nine different regions in the state. These members of the Advisory Council are appointed by the Office of the Governor and serve for two-year appointments. Tennessee also ensures public representation on the Advisory Council through ex officio membership from state departments. The Advisory Council’s structure allows for input from a broad range of Tennessee's leaders as well as different populations and regions in the state.

The Advisory Council also helps integrate suicide prevention strategies across organizations at the local level. Each of Tennessee’s nine regions has its own local council led by the three-person team that serves on the statewide Advisory Council. These three-person teams hold their own local council meetings with community members who are appointed to serve on the local councils by their county commissioners. The three-person teams then report back to the statewide Advisory Council on the needs, resources, and trends identified through their local council’s work.

The statewide Advisory Council evaluates and reports on suicide prevention activities annually to the Tennessee governor. The Advisory Council’s role in evaluation and reporting enables it to provide guidance on suicide prevention and garner infrastructure support for local efforts.
The Advisory Council believes it is important for all members to come together with a purpose and role to play. Those who serve on Tennessee’s local and state councils often feel they are supporting their own healing and recovery while contributing to a larger cause.

Learn how your state can develop similar infrastructure and read additional examples by visiting the Partner [6] essential element of SPRC’s State Infrastructure Recommendations.

Links within this resource

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