

# VERMONT SUICIDE PREVENTION CENTER ([www.vtspc.org](http://www.vtspc.org))

For more information contact: JoEllen Tarallo-Falk, Ed.D., MCHES, FASHA

[joellen@healthandlearning.org](mailto:joellen@healthandlearning.org) (802) 251-0488 direct line (802) 254-6590 general line



## Suicide is a public health issue in Vermont (Statistics are per hundred thousand)

- *There are more suicides in Vermont each year than motor vehicle fatalities or homicides*
- Suicide affects individuals and families of all ages, socio-economic groups; all cultural and ethnic backgrounds.
- *Death by suicide is higher in Vermont than the national average:* in Vermont, the rate is 19 deaths to the national average of 12.7. There are approximately two suicides per week in Vermont.
- *More youth in Vermont die by suicide than nationally:* VT youth suicide rate is 14.9 compared to 11.2 nationally.
- Recent data shows there were **441 hospitalizations for attempted suicide in Vermont, and 1,007 Emergency Room visits for suicide attempts** in a single year.
- Suicides in Vermont have increased across the age groups and *among those 65 and older, the rates more than doubled* from 12.6 per 100,000 in 2008 to 25.5 per 100,000 in 2011.
- In the *Vermont Youth Risk Behavior Survey* results 2011-2013, there was *an increase in students who reported having made a plan to kill themselves and having made a suicide attempt, from 9% of all high school students to 11% of all high school students. 20% of high school students contemplated suicide.*

## Vermont Suicide Prevention Center will:

- **Develop and disseminate public information materials** on recognizing warning signs of suicide and depression, educating loved ones about how to remove lethal means from access.
- **Help connect at-risk individuals to mental health services**
  - Provide *Umatter for Schools, Umatter for Communities and ASIST* trainings for educators professionals
  - Provide *Umatter for Youth and Young Adults* training focused on warning signs, what to do, mental health wellness, depression awareness & coping
- Provide training for vulnerable groups: Youth who are Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, or Questioning (LGBTQ) are at a *four times greater risk* of attempting suicide and the elderly.
- **Assist schools and communities post-suicide event with resources and support to prevent** further mental health problems and offset the conditions leading to mental health issues.
- **Train health providers to reach at-risk individuals with evidence-based practices** before a suicide attempt, thereby reducing Emergency Room visits and hospitalizations. In the month prior to their suicide, 70% of older men and 50% of all who died by suicide nationwide had contact with primary care.
- **Increase surveillance of behavioral health clients and outcomes** with regard to what services people were receiving prior to taking their life and how to improve them.

## Vermont Suicide Prevention Center has successfully implemented suicide prevention programs statewide:

- Trained 1339 individuals since 2012 including professionals from schools, juvenile justice, social services, mental health, health providers, police and first responders, higher education, and other community settings
- Community Suicide Prevention trainees showed a statistically significant (20%) increase in their knowledge about suicide prevention after the trainings.
- After participating in the *Umatter* trainings, 31 schools reported:
  - training 2,727 middle and high school students on the *Lifelines* student gatekeeper curriculum;
  - conducting staff awareness trainings for at least 360 additional middle and high school staff;
  - reaching out to their local mental health agency (72%) following the *Umatter for Schools* Training.
- Provided intense prevention and postvention support to 6 communities and 20 schools.
- Built capacity at 13 VT Institutions of Higher Education to implement comprehensive approaches to suicide prevention on their campuses.
- Launched *Umatter for Youth* - 95 youth learned about promoting mental health wellness and are developing community action projects.

## Vermont Suicide Prevention Center needs support:

VT-SPC's SAMHSA Grant (\$479,000) has supported the majority of the work-to-date *and expires in August 2015*, which will leave nothing for a proactive approach to fight suicide. The current Vermont State AHS/DMH allocation of \$100,000 represents *approximately 1/6<sup>th</sup> of the current VT-SPC budget* and is *inadequate to support VT-SPC's continued efforts*. A Vermont AHS/DMH *allocation of \$750,000* will allow VT-SPC to continue training, expand to vulnerable populations, provide assistance to schools and communities post-event, and promote resources designed *to reduce suicides in Vermont*.

# The Vermont Suicide Prevention Center

## Programs & Services 2014

### Mission:

To create health promoting communities in which schools, Institutions of Higher Education, public and private agencies and people of all ages have the knowledge, attitudes, skills and resources to reduce the risk for suicide.

### Purpose:

To support state-wide suicide prevention efforts and help local communities implement the recommendations of the Vermont Suicide Prevention Platform using data-driven evidence-based practices.

### VT SPC Goals

- Promote mental health and emotional resilience in Vermont through public education and promotion of prevention policies;
- Cultivate strong state and local leadership for suicide prevention and intervention and encourage collaboration on use of resources;
- Involve youth and adults in suicide prevention activities, including public education that encourages the development of coping skills and help-seeking behavior;
- Equip youth and adult gatekeepers with the knowledge and skills necessary for responding effectively to signs of distress, and to intervene early with those who are showing warning signs of suicide;
- Enhance strategies for early identification of mental health problems;
- Encourage access to primary care and mental health services providing effective intervention;
- Support the use of data and personal stories to describe the impact of suicide in Vermont;
- Provide strategic tools for developing suicide prevention programs, implement interventions, and promote policies to prevent suicide.

### VT SPC Services

- Suicide Prevention and Postvention Protocols for Professionals;
- Development and Support of Suicide Prevention and Postvention Trainers;
- School Policy, Protocol and Curriculum Development;
- Training and Support for Schools and Institutions of Higher Education;
- Mental Health, Depression Awareness and Compassion Training;
- Development of Culturally Appropriate Prevention Strategies.

### Resources and Online Education

- *Umatter* Public Information Campaign, Websites and Mobile Application;
- Webinars and E-Learning for Professionals;
- Parent, Staff and Community Awareness.

### Umatter Public Information Materials

- Print Media: Posters, Brochures, Wallet Cards
- Digital Media Development
- Public Service Announcements

### Conferences and Symposia

- Regional and Statewide Inter-Disciplinary Events;
- VT Symposium on Suicide Prevention

### For more information, please contact:

Nicole Miller, Program Specialist  
(802)254-6590  
nicole@healthandlearning.org

<http://www.vtspc.org>

*This brochure was developed by the Center for Health and Learning under a grant from the VT Department of Mental Health. The views, opinions and content expressed in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the VT Department of Mental Health and should not be construed as such.*

**The Vermont Suicide Prevention Advisory Group** consists of representatives from public health, education, state agencies, suicide prevention advocacy groups, youth-serving agencies, mental health services, and survivors throughout the state of Vermont.

**Mercedes Avila**, Evaluator , University of Vermont  
Vermont Child Health Improvement Program (VCHIP)

**Patty Baroudi**, Substance Abuse Prevention Coordinator  
Vermont Department of Health

**Ashley Berliner**, Health Access Policy and Planning Chief,  
Department of Vermont Health Access

**Sasha Bianci**, District Director, Vermont Department of  
Health

**Charlie Biss**, Director Child and Adolescent Services,  
Vermont State Department of Developmental and Mental  
Health Services

**Barbara Bonney**, Mental/Behavioral Health Specialist  
Department of Veterans Affairs

**Annie Cressey**, Health Educator, University of Vermont

**Tom Delaney**, Evaluator, University of Vermont  
Vermont Child Health Improvement Program (VCHIP)

**Anne B. Donahue**, Vermont State Representative

**Paul Dragon**, Director of the Office of Economic  
Opportunity, Department for Children and Families

**Ross Farnsworth**, AHS Training Coordinator, Department of  
Corrections

**Monica Caserta Hutt**, Director of Policy and Planning  
Agency of Human Services

**Sally Kerschner**, Planning Specialist, Vermont Department  
of Health

**Bill Lippert**, Vermont State Representative

**Linda Livendale**, Survivor  
Chairperson, VT American Foundation for Suicide Preven-  
tion

**Donna McAllister**, Health Education Specialist, , Vermont  
Agency of Education

**Charlotte McCorkel**, Emergency Services Program Director,  
Howard Center for Human Services

**MaryEllen Mendl**, Director Vermont 2-1-1  
United Ways of Vermont

**Eliot Nelson, M.D.**, Pediatrician  
Professor, University of Vermont College of Medicine  
Vermont Children's Hospital at Fletcher Allen

**Nick Nichols**, Mental Health Policy Director  
Vermont Department of Mental Health

**Kelly Short**, Survivor

**Cathleen M. Voyer**, Executive Vice President,  
Survivor AGC/VT