

# Suicide Prevention Legislative Advocacy Day - Issues Brief

Vermont Suicide Prevention Center February 2021

**For more information, please contact:**

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Suicide is a leading health problem in Vermont - Vermonters have consistently died by suicide at a rate of more than 30% higher than the national average over the last 15 years. The state ranks 18<sup>th</sup> highest in the nation for rates of suicide.

Suicide is the 8<sup>th</sup> leading cause of death in Vermont across all age groups. For those aged 15-35 suicide is the 2<sup>nd</sup> leading cause of death. In Vermont there are 2-3 deaths per week by suicide. Vermont lost 109 residents to suicide in 2019.\*

Suicide while preventable, remains a public health problem throughout the state. Comprehensive, well-coordinated suicide prevention activities are required to identify those at risk, educate community members and professionals to intervene in a timely way, and create systems in schools, colleges, health care, and community provider services for effective prevention and postvention.

## **VT Suicide Prevention Coalition priorities:**

### **Create a full-time position within Department of Mental Health**

- Oversee suicide prevention strategies throughout the state.
- Maximize impact of existing programs and coordinate alignment of efforts.

### **Increase outreach of suicide prevention resources**

- Expand and bring to scale the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (soon to be 9-8-8) to ensure call response occurs in Vermont.

### **Increase means reduction strategies**

- address the role of access to lethal means and increase awareness of safe storage practices for firearms.

### **Expand programs that provide mental health and suicide prevention along the continuum of care**

- Expand Vermont's existing Zero Suicide initiative by increasing programs that effectively identify individuals who need help and provide a smooth transition into care.
- Implement Mobile Response to provide support and intervention into the community improving access to care and averting crisis response at the Emergency Room.

### **Target at-risk populations with suicide prevention strategies based on existing health disparities**

- Expand creation and evaluation of targeted resources for at risk groups (older Vermonters, LGBTQ, BIPOC, youth and young adults and Veterans).
- Expand programs that promote connectedness for youth and families, support elder care clinician programs and address social isolation for older Vermonters and provide suicide prevention presentations for health and education professionals that address at risk populations.

### **Expand *Umatter* → Prevention Program**

- Promote protective factors for youth and families and create prevention-prepared school communities.

### **Request Medicare waiver to improve access to treatment**

- Allow Medicare reimbursement to those mental health and substance use treatment professionals who are enrolled as providers in Vermont Medicaid under Vermont Medicaid provider requirements.

*\*Note: Preliminary 2020, data will be released by VT Department of Health in February 2021.*



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