



Suicide Prevention for Farming Communities and Agricultural Workplaces

Everyone has a role to play in suicide prevention. This resource is intended to help those in farming communities and agricultural workplaces identify and respond to those who may be at risk for suicide. It also offers tips, strategies, and resources for creating safer communities and workplaces.

Risk Factors for Farmers and Agricultural Communities¹

- Financial strain
- Market volatility
- Extreme weather conditions
- Rural isolation
- Stigma and cultural factors
- Occupational hazards
- Stress

The CDC reports that in 2024, the suicide rates in the farming, fishing, and forestry occupational group were among the highest of any industry group.²

Rural isolation and stigma around seeking mental health help can contribute to increased suicide risk in agricultural communities.³

Access to firearms and toxic farm chemicals can make a crisis especially dangerous in agricultural communities.³



Protective Factors for Agricultural Communities¹

- Strong connections to individuals, family, community, and social institutions.
- Life skills, including problem-solving and coping skills, and the ability to adapt to change.
- Self-esteem and a sense of purpose or meaning in life.
- Sense of belonging.
- Cultural, religious, or personal beliefs that discourage suicide.

Warning Signs of Suicide⁴

The behaviors listed below may be some of the signs that someone is thinking about suicide.³ If these warning signs apply to you or someone you know, get help as soon as possible, particularly if the behavior is new or has increased recently.

Talking about:

- Wanting to die
- Great guilt or shame
- Being a burden to others

Feeling:

- Empty, hopeless, trapped, or having no reason to live
- Extremely sad, more anxious, agitated, or full of rage
- Unbearable emotional or physical pain

Changing behavior, such as:

- Making a plan or researching ways to die
- Withdrawing from friends, saying goodbye, giving away important items, or making a will
- Taking dangerous risks such as driving extremely fast
- Displaying extreme mood swings
- Eating or sleeping more or less
- Using drugs or alcohol more often



Agriculture-Specific Warning Signs⁵

- Expressing feelings of being a burden or making statements such as, “I can’t afford to tend to the crop this year”
- Missed planting or harvesting windows
- Neglected livestock, broken fences, or sudden unplanned downsizing
- Behavioral shifts, including any recent marked change from their normal behavior (e.g., social withdrawal, uncharacteristic anger, neglect of routine or financial responsibilities)

Providing Support

Here are some ways those in farming and agricultural workplaces can support each other to create safer communities and workplaces.

Encourage Help-Seeking Behaviors

Build connection and belonging by creating spaces where farmers can connect with each other (group coffee once a month, grill outs, etc.).

Reduce stigma around mental health concerns by talking openly about stress and the challenges farmers and farming communities experience.

Normalize asking for help.

Supporting Strong Communities

- Check in with neighboring producers regularly.
- Share equipment, knowledge, and resources when possible.
- Notice when someone has “gone quiet” or seems socially withdrawn.
- Offer practical help during illness, injury, or family hardship.
- Celebrate milestones and successful seasons together.
- Keep emergency contact information readily available.
- Know local behavioral health and crisis resources before they’re needed.



Supporting Safer Workplaces⁶

Managers and co-workers can use these tips to help create safer workplaces.

- Foster open and empathetic communication
- Set clear expectations and provide regular feedback
- Train leaders to provide coaching and support
- Implement peer support and mentoring systems
- Promote wellness and employee assistance programs
- Provide practical flexibility and work-life balance
- Encourage a culture of recognition and appreciation
- Design spaces and routines for connection

Five Action Steps⁷

Here are five steps from the #BeThe1To campaign that you can take to help someone who is having thoughts of suicide:

1. **Ask:** “Are you thinking about suicide?” It’s not an easy question to ask, but it can help start a conversation. Studies show that asking people if they are suicidal does not increase suicidal behavior or thoughts.
2. **Be There:** Listening without judgment is key to learning what the person is thinking and feeling. Research suggests acknowledging and talking about suicide may reduce suicidal thoughts.
3. **Help Keep Them Safe:** Reducing access to highly lethal items or places can help prevent suicide. Asking the person if they have a plan and making lethal means less available or less deadly can help the person stay safe when suicidal thoughts arise.
4. **Help Them Connect:** Connecting the person with the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline (call or text 988) and other community resources can give them a safety net when they need it. You can also help them reach out to a trusted family member, friend, spiritual advisor, or mental health professional.
5. **Follow Up:** Staying in touch with the person after they have experienced a crisis or been discharged from care can make a difference. Studies show that supportive, ongoing contact can play an important role in suicide prevention.



Strategies for Creating Safer Workplaces

Leverage existing networks

Normalize conversations about mental health and wellness and integrate them in standard safety briefings, local equipment co-op meetings, and/or regional agricultural extension programs.

Seek out specialized peer support

Build awareness of agriculture-specific digital forums, such as the dedicated agribusiness sub-networks available via platforms like the AgriSafe Network of Farm Aid. These networks make it easier to engage other farmers who may have shared experiences.

Provide solutions that protect privacy

Offer private, remote mental health resources or employee assistance programs (EAPs) that employees can access at any time. Post resources and toll-free support numbers such as the 988 Lifeline in breakrooms and other spaces where employees gather.

Supportive Conversations in the Workplace

Peers and supervisors can use this example language to help start a supportive conversation with someone who seems to be struggling.

Mark: *“Hey, Bill. Thanks for taking the time to meet with me today. I wanted to check in on you to see how you are doing. I’ve noticed that you’ve mentioned feeling burned out and hopeless. What has been going on?”*

During the conversation, listen to what the person says without judgement, reflect what they say back to them, and acknowledge that conversations like this can be challenging. Be prepared to provide support and have a list of appropriate resources ready.



Resource Access

Whenever possible, make information about local and national resources available in accessible locations, including breakrooms and other gathering spaces.

988 Lifeline

<https://988lifeline.org/>

Call or text 988 24/7

AgriStress Helpline

1-833-897-2474

Farm State of Mind

<https://www.fb.org/initiative/farm-state-of-mind>

Western Regional Agricultural Stress Assistance Partnership

<https://farmstress.us/>



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Suggested Citation

Suicide Prevention Resource Center. (2026). *Suicide prevention for farming communities and agricultural workplaces*. <https://sprc.org/resources/suicide-prevention-for-farming-communities-and-agricultural-workplaces>