New Hampshire’s implementation of its state suicide prevention plan provides a powerful example of coordinated work resulting in tangible improvements to the state's prevention infrastructure. Through New Hampshire's Suicide Prevention Council (SPC) subcommittee structure, SPC members remained focused on ensuring the plan’s implementation in the midst of competing demands. Finally, the SPC maintained trust by publicly reporting on the state of suicide and prevention in New Hampshire, including the progress of the plan’s implementation.

Although the SPC is legislatively mandated, it acts as an independent body. In consultation with state partners, the SPC updates the New Hampshire state plan every three years. Each of the SPC’s seven subcommittees focuses on one or more key areas in the state plan:

- Communications and public education
- Data collection and analysis
- Law enforcement (includes all first responders)
- Military and veterans
- Public policy
- Suicide fatality review
- Survivors of suicide loss

The strong leadership and active participation the subcommittees provide was particularly important before the recent addition of the state suicide prevention coordinator role. The subcommittees still play a critical role in planning and implementing statewide efforts in concert with the state coordinator. Accomplishing everything that needs to be done requires many people’s input, expertise, energy, and efforts.

Because each SPC subcommittee focuses on a specific area of the state plan, they have a greater chance of actually implementing changes outlined in the plan as well as improving infrastructure. For example, the Public Policy Subcommittee’s work led to the passage of RSA 193-J [1], which requires schools to develop suicide prevention policies and training. The subcommittee developed the first draft of the bill, helped solidify bipartisan
sponsorship, and advocated at the local and state levels for its passage.

To document the state’s progress on suicide prevention, each year the SPC publishes an annual report that includes accomplishments and suicide-related data. In 2020, the subcommittees and SPC members additionally evaluated how well they did in implementing the state plan goals, as well as the subcommittee structure itself. The results will be shared broadly, including with the governor and legislature, and incorporated into the new state suicide prevention plan.

A key initial finding of the evaluation is that the state plan’s goals need to be more specific and measurable so the subcommittees and the public can see progress—or lack thereof—more easily. The evaluation also highlights a need to improve coordination among the subcommittees and the SPC. To address these challenges, the SPC is using tools developed by the Suicide Prevention Resource Center (SPRC) to clearly identify measurable goals for each subcommittee that align directly with the state plan goals. Using the Recommendations for State Suicide Prevention Infrastructure: Essential Elements Assessment Tool [2] will also allow the SPC to build consensus on how they will prioritize their goals.

The new prevention plan will be closely tied to the New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Service’s (DHHS) 10-year Mental Health Plan [3] so that suicide prevention remains at the forefront of the state government’s behavioral health efforts. Several SPC members served on the plan development team, further demonstrating the council’s influence and leadership while building state prevention infrastructure.

Additional Resource

- Read more about New Hampshire’s SPC and state plan [4].

Learn how your state can develop similar infrastructure and read additional examples by visiting the Authorize [5] and Partner [6] essential elements of SPRC’s state Infrastructure Recommendations.

Links within this resource

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