

August 15, 2019

Fellow Policy-Makers,

We are writing you today as legislative representatives who have served on the **Advisory Panel for Recommendations for State Suicide Prevention Infrastructure** with the national **Suicide Prevention Resource Center**. In short, we have been meeting for over a year to develop recommendations for you as legislators to use, as relevant, in your own suicide prevention efforts. We are excited to announce that we now have the recommendations finalized, and you are receiving them hot off the press!

As you might know, the **cost of suicide can be enormous to states**: lost days of work due to mental health issues, hospitalizations, emergency responses, involuntary detentions, and associated impacts (kids put into foster care, support needed by industries with high rates of suicide—like farming, construction, and extraction). Statistically, each of you has most likely already witnessed the **deep emotional toll** on individual constituents and communities with both the **suicide and opioid crises**, which can overlap.

In our work, we have realized how critical states' roles are in **shifting from crisis response to prevention**. Suicide prevention is more than obtaining treatment for a mental health or substance use issue (although that is important). It is also about building individual and community strengths, improving resilience, and creating a community network that intervenes early—**before** a situation becomes a suicidal crisis.

You will see in the attached summary recommendations that stable infrastructure for suicide prevention efforts can help:

- Build internal coping and problem-solving skills that help people to avoid becoming suicidal;
- Allow states to focus on **your** unique resources and areas of strongest need—not just those dictated by grant parameters;
- Be **more cost effective** than the usual boom/bust model of grant reliance where time, talent, money, and momentum are built, lost, and rebuilt;
- Utilize collaboration within your current infrastructure—fill existing gaps and **avoid duplication** of services, products, and efforts.

Research shows that a singular focus on suicide prevention saves lives. In states where funding is stable, more progress is made in crisis/tragedy response, appropriate healthcare, and community education.

Please share these and talk with your governors, state suicide prevention coordinators, state suicide prevention coalitions, and communities about what your state might be able and willing to do to help stop preventable suicides of your constituents. For further information or questions, please feel free to contact the Suicide Prevention Resource Center (<http://www.sprc.org/contact-us>) or to reach out to either of us directly. You can also access the full recommendations at www.sprc.org/state-infrastructure.

In the peace of prevention,

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Summary Recommendations for State Suicide Prevention Infrastructure

Suicide prevention is more than crisis services and treatment. Based on thorough research, expert consensus, and known best practices, these recommendations will help streamline your suicide prevention efforts and improve capacity to save lives in your state.

★ RECOMMENDATIONS

Authorize

- ★ Designate a lead division or organization
- ★ Identify and secure resources required to carry out all six essential functions
- ★ Maintain a state suicide prevention plan that is updated every 3-5 years

To further strengthen your infrastructure:

- + Authorize the designated suicide prevention agency to develop, carry out, and evaluate the suicide prevention plan
- + Require an annual report to the legislature or governor on the state of suicide and prevention efforts, the extent and effectiveness of any statute or rule related to suicide, and emerging needs

Lead

- ★ Maintain a dedicated leadership position
- ★ Dedicate core staff positions, training, and technology needed to carry out all six essential functions
- ★ Develop capacity to respond to information requests from officials, communities, the media, and the general public

To further strengthen your infrastructure:

- + Where interests intersect, establish a formal connection between the relevant government divisions or offices
- + Build staff capacity to effectively communicate across multiple audiences and formats
- + Develop division/agency commitment to spur cross-discipline collaboration and integrate programs across funding sources

Partner

- ★ Form a statewide coalition with broad public and private sector representation
- ★ Adopt a shared vision and language across partners

To further strengthen your infrastructure:

- + Build partner capacity to integrate suicide prevention efforts into their structures, policies, and activities
- + Develop written agreements detailing each partner's commitment

Examine

- ★ Allocate sufficient funding and personnel to support high quality, privacy-protected suicide morbidity and mortality data collection and analysis
- ★ Identify, connect with, and strengthen existing data sources
- ★ Ensure that high-risk and underserved populations are represented in data collection
- ★ Develop the skills and a plan for regularly analyzing and using data to inform action at the state and local levels

To further strengthen your infrastructure:

- + Link data from different systems while protecting privacy



★ RECOMMENDATIONS

Build

- ★ Build a multi-faceted, lifespan approach to suicide prevention across the state, in concert with the state plan:
 - » Understand, develop, and enforce expert-informed policies and regulations that support suicide prevention
 - » Strengthen the crisis system and policies, including mobile response and hotlines
 - » Establish policies and model practices in preparation for post-suicide response, including in the event of a suicide cluster
 - » Promote “upstream” strategies that proactively prevent suicide risk and enhance protective factors
 - ★ Designate sufficient funding to carry out or support a multi-faceted approach
 - ★ Develop the ability to evaluate and share results
- To further strengthen your infrastructure:
- + Embed expectations for suicide prevention within relevant state-funded contracts

Guide

- ★ Ensure the ability to plan, provide, and evaluate guidance for state, county, and local efforts
 - ★ Identify and allocate resources needed to guide state, county, and local efforts
- To further strengthen your infrastructure:
- + Identify and maintain an updated list of available trainings that meet state requirements or recommendations

ABOUT THE RECOMMENDATIONS FOR STATE SUICIDE PREVENTION INFRASTRUCTURE

SPRC conducted a thorough research literature review and environmental scan, consulted with experts from 21 state and national organizations, held focus groups with state suicide prevention leaders, and solicited focused feedback from specialists in state government and those personally touched by suicide. To read the full recommendations, please go to www.sprc.org/state-infrastructure.

About SPRC: The National Suicide Prevention Resource Center (SPRC) is your one-stop source for suicide prevention since 2002. We have worked with thousands of suicide prevention leaders at the community, state, tribal, campus, and national levels to support their prevention efforts. Together, we can help support those who are struggling and save lives across the country.

