

*The following information is intended to provide a snapshot of key models, programs, and initiatives focused on suicide prevention in Vermont healthcare settings. For questions or suggested edits regarding this document, please contact Chris Allen, Suicide Prevention Director, Department of Mental Health, at [christopher.m.allen@vermont.gov](mailto:christopher.m.allen@vermont.gov).*

## Key Terms and Models

### Zero Suicide: SAFER CARE FOR THOSE AT RISK OF SUICIDE

*Zero Suicide* is a transformational framework for health and mental health care systems. Inspired by health care systems that saw dramatic reductions in patient suicide, the foundational belief of Zero Suicide is that suicide deaths for individuals under the care of health and behavioral health systems are preventable. For systems dedicated to improving patient safety, Zero Suicide presents an aspirational challenge and practical framework for system-wide transformation toward safer suicide care. As described below, Vermont is implementing a number of initiatives using the Zero Suicide framework to guide improvements in healthcare and reduce suicide deaths and attempts in Vermont. Click on the link for more info, <https://zerosuicide.edc.org/>

### SafeSide

*SafeSide* is an online learning platform being promoted and offered in Vermont to support suicide prevention in primary care settings. Safeside provides a framework, tools, templates, training, and data to strengthen organizational cultures for safety and prevention; promote best practices, policies, and pathways; and support its ongoing education and development. In 2024 and 2025, Safeside will be offered free-of-charge to primary care practices participating in the *Suicide Safer Care Mini Grant Project* (see below). <https://safesideprevention.com/>

## Vermont Suicide Prevention Initiatives

### Suicide Safer Care Mini Grant Project

The Blueprint for Health and Departments of Health (VDH) and Mental Health (DMH) are partnering with the Center for Health and Learning to implement improved screening, risk assessment, treatment, safety planning, lethal means safety, and transitions of care in Primary Care Practices (PCP's) for patients who may be experiencing suicidality. The project provides training, networking, and quality improvement tools to participating organizations and supports collaboration between primary care practices and their regional Designated Agency improve referrals and transitions of care for treatment of suicidality. For more information, contact Chris Allen at [christopher.m.allen@vermont.gov](mailto:christopher.m.allen@vermont.gov).

### Vermont Emergency Department Suicide Prevention Quality Improvement Initiative

The Vermont Program for Quality in Health Care (VPQHC), in partnership with the Vermont Department of Health and two private foundations, are working with Vermont hospitals to improve suicide care in emergency departments for individuals experiencing suicidality using the *Zero Suicide* framework. Click on the link for more info, <https://www.vpqhc.org/>

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## Blueprint Expansion

Vermont is facing a crisis in access to health care and increased deaths from drug overdose and suicide. The Blueprint Community Health Team Expansion Pilot Program will focus on supporting Mental Health and Substance Use (MH/SUD) conditions. This will be done by expanding Community Health Team staff (CHT) at Patient Centered Medical Homes. Vermont Act 78 in 2023 authorized increased funding to hire additional team members such as nurses, social workers, community health workers to provide co-occurring mental health and substance use support. This support includes screening for social drivers of health that include housing, finances, mental health, suicide and substance use. These team members can provide brief intervention, treatment, and navigation to services. They can also support coordination of services with community partners such as housing resources, economic services, food insecurity resources and transportation. The objective of this project is to ensure that screening, intervention, and navigation to services occurs across the entire population served by Blueprint primary care practices, roughly 131 practices across the state. This expansion will also extend educational offerings to CHT staff and will increase quality improvement facilitation for integration of Mental Health and Substance Use CHT staff into Patient-Centered Medical Homes.

[Community Health Team Expansion Pilot Program | Blueprint for Health \(vermont.gov\)](#)

## Facing Suicide VT

The Department of Health (VDH) and Department of Mental Health have developed and launched a state-wide public awareness campaign and website entitled Facing Suicide VT to promote awareness of suicide prevention resources, reduce stigma, encourage help-seeking and help-giving behavior, and give a voice to Vermonters who have been affected by suicide. Click on the link for more info, [FacingSuicideVT.com](https://www.facingsuicidevt.com)

## Child Psychiatry Access Program


The Vermont Child Psychiatry Access Program (VTCAP) is a training and consultation program that provides FREE, immediate support and psychiatric consultation to primary care providers (PCPs) who, in turn, provide care to their pediatric patients in need of mental health treatment. Click on the link for more info, <https://www.vtcpap.com/>

## Garrett Lee Smith Youth Zero Suicide Academy and Community of Practice

The Department of Health, in collaboration with the Educational Development Center, is offering ongoing training and consultation to teams of staff at youth mental health programs to improve care for youth at risk for suicide using the Zero Suicide framework and treatment guidelines. For more info, contact Stephanie Busch [stephanie.busch@vermont.gov](mailto:stephanie.busch@vermont.gov).

## Mission Connect Vermont: Governor's Challenge

*Mission Connect* is a statewide initiative that includes a broad set of state, community and federal partners working to identify innovative ways to deliver support and care to Service Members, Veterans, and their Families whenever and wherever they need it. Areas of focus include: 1) Identify Service Members, Veterans, and their Families wherever they are, and screen for suicide risk, 2) Promote connectedness and improve care transitions, making it easy to identify and access necessary resources to support our SMVF, 3) Increase lethal means safety and safety planning through a targeted educational approach for health care professionals and access to the needed safety strategies. Click on the link for more info, <https://www.vahhs.org/governors-challenge>



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Man Therapy: VDH is partnering with *Grit Digital* to promote the web-based, interactive mental health resource [Man Therapy](#) in Vermont. Man Therapy is designed to increase access to mental health supports for men who may be struggling with thoughts of suicide but are hesitant to seek mental health support. This resource can be promoted in a variety of settings, including primary care practices as a mental health wellness tool for patients at risk for suicide or depression. For more information, contact Nick Nichols @ [nick.nichols@vermont.gov](mailto:nick.nichols@vermont.gov).

Promotion of Safe Storage and Lethal Means Safety: VDH and DMH are working to support the promotion of safe storage and lethal means safety across several different settings and programs, including health care partners. For information about how healthcare settings can promote safe storage and lethal means safety, go to: <https://healthandlearning.org/prevention-resources/>

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### **Vermont Programs Supporting Suicide Prevention**

*For a full list of resources and organizations that support suicide prevention in Vermont, please go to: <https://facing-suicidevt.com/resources/>.*