

Effective Suicide Prevention Approaches and National Strategies

Executive Summary

July 2018

July 2018

This report has been prepared by the Provincial Injury Prevention Program.

Contact

For more information, please contact:

Deb Payne
Manager
Provincial Injury Prevention Program
Deb.Payne@albertahealthservices.ca

Executive Summary

Introduction

Suicide is a significant and preventable public health issue (WHO, 2014). In Canada, approximately 4,000 people die by suicide each year (Health Canada, 2016). In 2016, Alberta experienced a significant decrease (37%) in suicide rates, compared to a 17% increase between 2014 and 2015 (Alberta Injury Surveillance Dashboard, 2018).

Alberta Health Services (AHS), the provincial health authority responsible for planning and delivering health supports and services for Albertans, plays a key leadership role in provincial initiatives that address suicide prevention.

Purpose

As part of the Suicide Prevention Working Group, which reports to the Suicide Prevention Direction Setting Committee, this report is intended to support and guide the implementation of the AHS Injury Prevention Action Plan (2018-2023) and the Provincial Injury Prevention Operational Plan 2018.

AHS can learn from national strategies and use suicide prevention evidence to lead suicide prevention work. The following sections are discussed more thoroughly in the full report:

- a summary of national suicide prevention strategy evaluations
- an overview of the evidence
- recommendations for the governing body to action

Background: National Strategies for Suicide Prevention

Comprehensive suicide prevention strategies are considered best practice and are encouraged by the World Health Organization (WHO), with a goal of reducing the rate of suicide by 10% by 2020 (WHO, 2013). Consequently, a number of countries either currently have or have had a national suicide prevention strategy (WHO, 2014); however, there is limited evaluation of the national strategies. In support of the WHO's call to develop comprehensive national suicide prevention strategies, an evaluative study of national suicide prevention programs initiated between 1980-2000 in 21 OECD

countries by Matsubayashi & Ueda (2011) showed that national suicide prevention strategies are effective at reducing the suicide rate.

A jurisdictional scan identified 6 national strategy evaluation reports, 2 detailed progress reports with data and 1 provincial evaluation report.

Although data was a challenge across national strategies, the evaluations identify high-level outcomes and activities associated with these outcomes. Other limitations of the evaluation reports included data quality, attribution and outcome monitoring.

Conclusions & Recommendations

Based on the evaluation reports and evidence presented, there are seven areas of improvement to consider to support the implementation of the Injury Prevention Action Plan and the Injury Prevention Operational Plan. Additional considerations including: media campaigns, training, surveillance, evaluation, research, collaboration and strengthened commitment and governance would be beneficial.

The seven recommendations for improvement:

1. Include a WSPD media campaign pilot in the Operational Plan.
2. Include the exploration of 'AHS Tips for Addressing Suicide in Media' in the Injury Prevention Operational Plan.
3. Ensure surveillance and evaluation are priorities in the Injury Prevention Operational Plan.
4. Ensure research is included as a key focus activity in the Injury Prevention Operational Plan, with measureable objectives and activities set out.
5. Ensure collaboration and stakeholder engagement are key focus areas in the Injury Prevention Operational Plan and ensure this commitment is also reflected in the membership of the governance structure for suicide prevention.
6. Revise the governance structure and function for suicide prevention, to support effective oversight and implementation of the Injury Prevention Action Plan.
7. Ensure suicide prevention is an explicit priority across various AHS publicly available documents.

Finally, many of the evaluation reports identify that suicide prevention cannot happen on its own as there is a cultural component to it, however with the integration of the evidence and learnings from the national strategies, AHS can significantly contribute to the prevention of suicide in Alberta.

References

- Alberta Health Services, Safe Healthy Environments. (2017). Dashboard of suicide related-injuries for all methods by province and zone and all sexes April 28, 2018. Alberta Injury Surveillance Dashboard (suicide related-injuries). Retrieved from: <https://tableau.albertahealthservices.ca/#/views/AlbertaInjurySurveillanceDashboardDraft/Suicide-RelatedInjuries?:iid=1>
- Alberta Health Services. (2016). Inventory of AHS suicide prevention programs, activities, resources and initiatives. For internal AHS distribution only.
- Government of Canada (2017). Suicide in Canada. Retrieved from: <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/suicide-prevention/suicide-canada.html>
- Government of Manitoba. (2014). Suicide prevention: guidelines for public awareness and education activities. Retrieved on February 13, 2018, from <https://suicideprevention.ca/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/Suicide-Prevention-Guidelines-for-PA-Ed-Activities-FINAL-PDF1.pdf>
- Matsubayashi, T., & Ueda, M. (2011). The effect of national suicide prevention programs on suicide rates in 21 OECD nations. *Social Science and Medicine*, 73, 1395-1400. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2011.08.022>
- Turecki, G. (2016). Preventing suicide: where are we? *The Lancet Psychiatry*. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S2215-0366\(16\)30068-2](https://doi.org/10.1016/S2215-0366(16)30068-2)
- World Health Organization. (2017). Preventing suicide: a resource for media professionals, update 2017. Geneva: World Health Organization; (WHO/MSD/MER/17.5). Licence: CC BY-NC-SA 3.0 IGO.
- World Health Organization. (2014). Preventing suicide: A global imperative. Retrieved from http://www.who.int/mental_health/suicide-prevention/world_report_2014/en
- Zalsman, G., Hawton, K., Wasserman, D., van Heeringen, K., Arensman, E., Sarchiapone, M., ... Zohar, J. (2016). Suicide prevention strategies revisited: 10-year systematic review. *The Lancet Psychiatry*. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S2215-0366\(16\)30030-X](https://doi.org/10.1016/S2215-0366(16)30030-X)