

Suicide Prevention Services

We recognize that suicide is a serious public health problem and that more can be done to prevent suicide. Each year, more than 700,000 individuals across the entire world die by suicide. In the United States, suicide deaths have increased at an alarming pace. Suicide is the second leading cause of death among young people. In 2021, 48,183 Americans died by suicide. Here in New Jersey, 736 individuals died by suicide in 2022. In New Jersey, suicide is the third leading cause of death among 10-24 year olds. As an organization whose mission is all about improving mental health, Mental Health Association (MHA) took action to address this issue.

Research has proven that when increased resources are targeted at this suicide problem, it makes a difference and lives are saved. Over the last several years, the MHA clinical staff have responded to increasing community need and taught numerous workshops on suicide prevention. These suicide prevention workshops have been taught in Morris, Essex, Sussex, and Warren Counties to numerous school faculty, administrators, educational, support personnel and to the students themselves. MHA staff also taught suicide prevention workshops for local law enforcement recognizing that this represented another important group along with first responders that needed knowledge and help on the topic of suicide.

Description: The goal of the Suicide Prevention Services (SPS) is to spread awareness on suicide prevention by offering educational presentations designed for schools, communities, and specialized groups such as law enforcement, first responders, and college professionals. In addition, SPS has spread awareness through the creation and development of two youth suicide prevention websites:

StopTeenSuicide.mhainspire.org provides information on warning signs and practical ways to speak to a young person having suicidal thoughts. Furthermore, it features testimonials from young people who have attempted suicide and from those family and friends who have been impacted by those who have died by suicide.

YouAreNotAlone.mhainspire.org provides guidance, comfort and hope to young people struggling with suicidal ideations, as well as coping strategies and important resources in the event they are in a crisis.

The department continued to provide the community with education about suicide prevention and mental illness through multimedia outlets such as Zoom, Facebook, and Instagram. Presentations were recorded and uploaded to YouTube to educate a larger population of people. These videos focused on: depression, anxiety, suicide prevention, self-care, resiliency and creating positive coping skills in our youth. The suicide prevention department has also begun to provide in-person educational opportunities. The departments objective is to meet the community where they are at, whether that be in-person or virtually.

Personnel: One LPC Level Program Director, PhD Level Program Clinician, and one LAC Community Educator.

Data and Highlights: The Suicide Prevention Services program has two suicide prevention websites. By the end of June 2021, the two teen suicide prevention landing pages have received a total of **7,358 Pageviews**. Broken-down by page:

- stopteensuicide.mhainspire.org – **5,386 Pageviews**
- youarenotalone.mhainspire.org – **1,972 Pageviews**

Since July of 2022, the MHA taught 242 presentations to over 6,453 individuals. These individuals included: parents, teachers, support staff, youth, college professors, school counselors, community

members, business professionals, and seniors. Presentations were given to: Congresswoman Mikie Sherrill's interns, NJ Center for Tourette Syndrome, Morris County Sexual Health Center, Drew University, County College of Morris, Lakeland Hills YMCA, NORWESCAP, and Madison YMCA.

The Signs of Suicide (SOS) Program was delivered to over 950 students in the Franklin Borough School, Green Hills School, Hardyston School, Frankford School, Hamburg School, Wardlaw+Hartridge, Sussex-Wantage School and Mount Arlington School. Signs of Suicide (SOS) teaches students how to identify signs of depression and suicide in themselves and their peers, while training school professionals, parents, and community members to recognize at-risk students and take appropriate action.

This year, the Mental Health Association delivered a new program to over 1,900 students from Randolph and Franklin Borough Elementary Schools, Montclair School District, Mount Arlington Schools, Green Hills, and Rockaway School District called Gizmo 4 Mental Health. Gizmo's Pawesome Guide to Mental Health takes an upstream approach to support the mental health and wellness of 3rd and 4th graders. The Guide seeks to introduce mental health and wellness, and how to care for one's mental health. It introduces the characteristics of trusted adults, who may be one, how to practice talking with a trusted adult, and promotes proactive communication. It gives youth the opportunity to create a personal mental health plan (of action) that they can use daily and in a time of need that can help them avert crisis.

Peer-to-Peer Support Line

Description: Peer-to-Peer Support Line is a warm line that is staffed by mental health consumers for people with mental illness. The hope and goal of this service is to provide telephone peer support to mental health consumers in lieu of costly and intrusive emergency psychiatric services. Per the sub grant requirement, the Line is expected to provide 1,460 Peer Line Service hours to a minimum of 160 unduplicated clients during the year. All Peer-to-Peer Support Line staff complete an individualized training program prior to working on the Line. The Line operates 7 days a week, 365 days a year from 5pm-10pm and 5 weekdays a week from 11am-2pm. Callers are able to call in using three separate lines in the evening, one line during the weekday and are provided peer counseling support services by trained staff.

Personnel: 25 Peer Line Staff, Director of Self-Help, Advocacy and Education, and Director of Suicide Prevention.

Data and Highlights: A third line and an additional staff was added due to the increase in call volume and weekday daytime hours to support callers especially during the pandemic. **The Peer-to-Peer Support Line provided hope, encouragement and resources to 162 people during 5415 hours of calls to the Peer-to-Peer Support Line.**

Outcome: 100% of callers report their satisfaction with Peer-to-Peer Support Line.

Outcome: 80% of Peer Line workers report satisfaction working the Peer-to-Peer Support Line.

Teen Connect Support Line

Description: Teen Connect Support Line is a warm line that is staffed by young people for young people. The target population to be served is youth ages 13-24 years old. Youth support is not common

in the United States with minimal lines in the nation that focus on employing teens to answer calls by other teens. Youths have a special ability to understand and empathize with callers because they are of the same age group. Many troubled adolescents find it easier to share their angst and dread on a hotline with people their age, rather than their parents or other authority figures. It can be easier for a teenager to reach out to a peer first, even if the next step is to speak with a trusted adult.

Personnel: 10 Teen Line Staff, Director, Program Clinician and Community Educator of Suicide Prevention.

Data and Highlights: Since its inception in November 2022, the Teen Connect Line has provided hope, encouragement and resources to over 115 young people during 1,448 hours of calls to Teen Connect.