

Suicide Prevention Services (SPS)

Description

Suicide Prevention raises awareness about suicide prevention by offering educational presentations and time-limited trainings to enhance the community's understanding of mental illness, treatment options, and coping skills. These presentations are designed for schools (e.g., faculty, support staff, administrators, and students from 3rd grade through 12th grade), communities (e.g., parents, family members, congregants, college students), and specialized groups (e.g., law enforcement, first responders, faith leaders, college professionals). Topics include (but are not limited to): an overview of mental health and mental illness, suicide prevention, how to talk about suicide, stress management, communication, wellness and self-care, understanding mindfulness, grief and loss, and more. Workshops and groups are delivered to help individuals—from elementary students to older adults—increase self-awareness, build coping skills, and express themselves through brief mindfulness and art-based activities. Additional services include implementing Mental Health Players and supervising two non-crisis warm lines.

Mental Health Players

Mental Health Players educate audiences through interactive role-plays to address important issues such as employment challenges, staff conflicts, aging, drug and alcohol use, parent/child conflicts, and mental illness. Role-playing is an effective way to engage audiences and encourage interaction, especially when traditional lecture-style methods may leave audiences disengaged or unresponsive. Performances last approximately 45 minutes, consist of two role-plays, and can be scheduled during the day or evening.

Peer-to-Peer Support Line

The Peer-to-Peer Support Line has been serving the community since 2005. This warmline is staffed by individuals with lived experience of mental illness and/or substance use disorders, who provide support and guidance to others facing similar challenges. The goal of this service is to offer a safe space for non-crisis peer support via telephone, promoting resilience and wellness through shared understanding and empathy for individuals living with mental illness and/or substance use disorders. All Peer-to-Peer Support Line staff complete an individualized training program before working on the Line. The Line operates seven days a week, 365 days a year, from 5 p.m. to 10 p.m., and on five weekdays from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Teen Connect Support Line

Teen Connect Support Line has been serving the community since 2022. This warmline is staffed by young people, for young people. The intended population is youth aged 13-24 years old. Teen Connect staff provide coverage on two lines (one call, one text) from Monday to Friday, 5 p.m. to 10 p.m.

Personnel

A Program Director supervises the following services alongside the staff listed below:

Suicide Prevention Services: 1 Community Educator

Mental Health Players: 40 Volunteers

Peer-to-Peer Support Line: 19 Peer Line Staff

Teen Connect Support Line: 10 Teen Line Staff

East Orange YMCA Grant: 1 Clinician

Consumer Satisfaction Surveys

Suicide Prevention Training Survey Outcomes

According to feedback from FY2025 surveys, 97% of people agreed that they feel more confident in recognizing the signs that someone may be dealing with a mental health issue or expressing suicidal thoughts. Additionally, 92% indicated that they are more likely to intervene when they encounter someone experiencing a mental health crisis. Furthermore, 94% reported being more aware of the resources available to assist someone in crisis. These results demonstrate increased awareness and preparedness among participants to support individuals facing mental health challenges.

Peer-to-Peer Support Line Survey Outcomes

Thirteen out of fifteen callers reported that the Peer-to-Peer Support Line was very helpful in providing emotional support, and 100% of callers stated that the line met their needs. Additionally, 90% of Peer Line workers expressed satisfaction with their experience working on the Peer-to-Peer Support Line. These results highlight the positive impact of the service on both callers and volunteers.

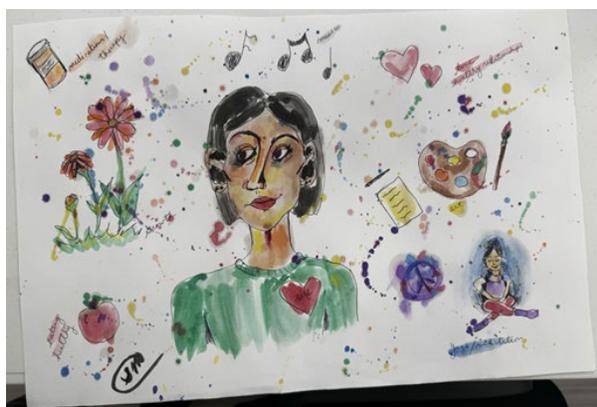
Program Highlights

The Suicide Prevention team facilitated 123 presentations, workshops, groups, and tabling event activities to 4,095 individuals ranging from elementary age students to older adults. Below is a detailed overview of these services.

Gizmo's Pawesome Guide to Mental Health was delivered to 813 students across eight schools in Essex, Morris, and Sussex Counties. The schools included Cleveland Elementary School in Newark, Woodmont Elementary School in Pine Brook, William Mason Elementary School in Montville, Green Hills School in Newton, Cedar Hill Elementary School in Towaco, Valley View Elementary School in Montville, and Hilldale Elementary School in Pine Brook. Additionally, the program facilitated the early childhood version for kindergarten to 2nd-grade students at Wharton Borough Public Schools. Gizmo's Pawesome Guide to Mental Health adopts an upstream approach to support the mental health and wellness of 3rd and 4th graders. The guide aims to introduce concepts of mental health and wellness, as well as how to care for one's mental health. It highlights the characteristics of trusted adults—who may be one—and encourages practicing conversations with them, promoting proactive communication. The program also provides youth with the opportunity to create a personal mental health plan—an action plan they can use daily and in times of need to help prevent crises.

A total of 82 presentations, workshops, groups, and tabling events were delivered to diverse audiences, including people with vision loss or blindness, adults in treatment for substance use, youth, older adults, faith-based communities, parents, teachers, support staff, community members, and public servants. These events took place within the following communities: Vision Loss Alliance (VLA), the Hope Institute, our Substance Use Recovery and Empowerment (SURE) program, our Community Wellness Centers (CWC), the Regency at Denville, Muslim Professional Group, Newark's Sustainable Health and Wellness Village Fest, Montclair Child Development Center (MCDC), Briarcliff Middle School, YouthBuild, NJ 211, Essex County College (ECC), County College of Morris (CCM), Morris and Sussex County Judiciaries, Livingston Town Hall, our Intensive Family Support Services (IFSS) in Essex, Mount Olive Baptist Church, Redeemer Lutheran Church, MMS Group, Employment Horizons, Anshe Emeth Memorial Temple's Caring Community Connections, and Bloomfield Parkway Lofts.

The Suicide Prevention team continued to implement an interactive, strength-based approach that included mindfulness and art-based activities to support the community through mental health presentations, workshops, and group topics. A total of 64 presentations, workshops, groups, and tabling events incorporated mindfulness and art-based activities. The team has training in embodied modalities (e.g., trauma-informed yoga, mindfulness, and art therapy), which are effective for connecting with individuals of all ages, especially youth. These modalities also serve as protective factors for mental health by (1) helping to process, understand, and communicate complex thoughts and emotions; (2) providing constructive outlets for challenging feelings; (3) encouraging self-expression and regulation; (4) engaging the senses, feelings, and physical action; (5) fostering understanding of different perspectives; and (6) nurturing confidence and a sense of identity. The image below is a painting created by an adult in treatment for substance use, symbolizing personal growth and an ideal paradise.



Using the Caring Partners of Morris & Sussex grant, the Suicide Prevention team provided 12 services for middle and high school students. They engaged with 277 youth in meaningful ways by hosting two events called *Express Yourself: An Empowering Youth Mental Health and Wellness Experience*, facilitating self-care journal workshops with dotted journal kits, and collaborating with a Korean American ceramic artist to offer peace cups workshops using air-drying clay at the Morris and Sussex

Counties YMCAs. The team also collaborated with the Lakeland Hills YMCA in Mountain Lakes for Healthy Kids Day and with Project Self-Sufficiency at the Newton Family Expo to provide various wellness services to youth. These events included videogaming on Triple A Mobile Gaming's truck, painting on mini canvases led by artists from Paint the Town, enjoying handcrafted ice pops from Puras Paletas, and distributing resource-filled goodie bags containing various self-care items.

In partnership with the Mayors Wellness Campaign grant for the township of West Orange and the Healthcare Foundation of the Oranges grant for the East Orange YMCA, the Suicide Prevention team expanded their services to provide mental health programming to these communities. Sixty-five West Orange older adults were able to share their experiences, learn from each other, and develop coping skills through support groups and book discussion groups. Additionally, over 20 youth between the ages of 5 and 13 received skills related to emotional regulation, communication, social interaction, and self-esteem through individual supportive counseling sessions at the East Orange YMCA.

SPS continues to spread awareness through two youth suicide prevention webpages. These webpages received a total of 1,803 pageviews during this fiscal year.

-StopTeenSuicide.mhainspire.org provides information on warning signs and practical ways to communicate with a young person experiencing suicidal thoughts. Additionally, it features testimonials from young people who have attempted suicide and from family and friends affected by those who have died by suicide. **This landing page received 515 pageviews.**

- YouAreNotAlone.mhainspire.org offers guidance, comfort, and hope to young people struggling with suicidal ideation, along with coping strategies and important resources to access during a crisis. **This landing page garnered 1,288 pageviews.**

Mental Health Players

Three Mental Health Players performances were delivered to 130 people consisting of older adults in West Orange, adults with disabilities at Employment Horizons in Cedar Knolls, and 2nd to 4th grade students at Cleveland Elementary School in Newark. These students received a "Junior Edition" of this program for National Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) Week. Four 8th grade students were selected to act out 2 skits on student issues focusing on bullying and peer pressure. Discussion included what to do if being bullied, who to talk to, and how to show respect and empathy for others.

Peer-to-Peer Support Line

The Peer-to-Peer Support Line provided hope, encouragement, and resources to 255 people during a total of 5,888 hours of calls. Although most calls originated from New Jersey, some came from out of state (e.g., Alabama, California, Canada, Connecticut, Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Idaho, Kansas, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, and Wisconsin).

Teen Connect Support Line

The Teen Connect Line provided hope, encouragement, and resources to 29 young people during a total of 2,613 hours of calls and texts. Our Teen Connect marketing campaign, active from October 1, 2024, to December 31, 2024, included short videos and a Reel featuring some of the Teen Connect staff. It was

promoted on TikTok and Instagram. These marketing strategies helped increase the exposure of this resource.

FY 2026 Goals

The Suicide Prevention team will continue to facilitate presentations, workshops, groups, and brief wellness activities during tabling events for various ages and populations within the community. They will also (1) implement 2-4 Mental Health Players performances, (2) increase the number of people served on the Peer-to-Peer Support Line and Teen Connect Support Line, (3) enhance awareness and visibility of the warmlines through innovative marketing strategies, and (4) provide ongoing training to improve the service quality of the warmlines. Due to the growth of mindfulness and art-based programming, the Suicide Prevention team has created a survey to assess participant satisfaction, which will be administered during the 2026 fiscal year.