

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), communities (e.g., parents, family members, congregants, and college students), and specialized groups (e.g., law enforcement, first responders, faith leaders, and 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, mindfulness, grief and loss, and more. Workshops and groups are delivered to help individuals, from elementary school 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 warmlines.

Mental Health Players

Mental Health Players educate audiences through interactive role-plays that 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

The 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 ages 13–24. Teen Connect staff provide coverage on two lines (one call and one text) Monday through Friday, from 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 FY 2026 surveys, 86% of participants agreed that they feel more confident in recognizing the signs that someone may be experiencing a mental health issue or expressing suicidal thoughts. Additionally, 88% indicated that they are more likely to intervene when they encounter someone experiencing a mental health crisis. Furthermore, 95% 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

96% of 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, 100% 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 Peer Line staff.

Program Highlights

The Suicide Prevention team facilitated 105 presentations, workshops, groups, and tabling event activities to 2,682 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 more than 20 students at Cleveland Elementary School in Newark. Gizmo's Pawesome Guide to Mental Health adopts an upstream approach to supporting the mental health and wellness of 3rd and 4th graders. The guide aims to introduce concepts of mental health and wellness, as well as ways to care for one's mental health. It highlights the characteristics of trusted adults, encourages students to identify trusted adults in their lives, and provides opportunities to practice 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 during times of need to help prevent crises.

The Signs of Suicide (SOS) Program was delivered to over 40 students at Barringer High School in Newark, NJ. It is an evidence-based youth suicide prevention program for middle and high school students. 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. The curriculum includes facilitation guidance with prompts for classroom discussion, age-appropriate videos featuring real stories and modeled scenarios, and a brief depression screen that encourages students to reflect on how they are feeling.

Mental health presentations, workshops, groups, and tabling events were delivered to various audiences, including 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: the Hope Institute, our Community Wellness Centers (CWC), the Livingston Old Guard, Montclair NAACP, Skanska USA Building Inc., Garden State Federal Credit Union, Montclair Child Development Center (MCDC), Briarcliff Middle School, Lacordaire Academy, YouthBuild, NJ 211, Church of the New Covenant, The Love of Jesus Family Church, The Presbyterian Church of Chatham Township, our Intensive Family Support Services (IFSS) in Essex, Shiv's Third Eye Foundation, The YANA Foundation (You Are Not Alone), and Darren Clark Jr. Memorial Foundation.

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. The team is trained 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 can also serve as protective factors for mental health by: (1) helping individuals process, understand, and communicate complex thoughts and emotions; (2) providing constructive outlets for challenging feelings; (3) encouraging self-expression and emotional regulation; (4) engaging the senses, feelings, and physical action; (5) fostering an understanding of different perspectives; and (6) nurturing confidence and a sense of identity. The image below is a drawing created by an older adult to visually process what they would like to release (e.g., anger and pain) and what they would like to retain (e.g., love, growth, and peace) for overall well-being.



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 its services to provide mental health programming to these communities. More than 70 older adults in West Orange were able to share their experiences, learn from one another, and develop coping skills through support groups, book discussion groups, creative expression groups, and other wellness activities. Additionally, more than 20 youth between the ages of 5 and 13 received support in developing 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 5,031 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 members and friends affected by the loss of someone to suicide. This landing page received 645 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 received 4,386 pageviews.

Mental Health Players

A Mental Health Players performance was delivered to over 20 older adults in West Orange. Through this interactive performance, older adults gained more knowledge about the distinction between grief and mental illness in widowhood, as well as the advantages and disadvantages of retirement.

Peer-to-Peer Support Line

The Peer-to-Peer Support Line provided hope, encouragement, and resources to 272 people during a total of 6,168 hours of calls. Although most calls originated from New Jersey, additional calls came from out of state.

Teen Connect Support Line

The Teen Connect Line provided hope, encouragement, and resources to 83 young people during a total of 2,610 hours of calls and texts. This consisted of 77 calls and 80 text conversations. Although most calls and texts originated from New Jersey, some came from out of state.

FY 2027 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. The team will also (1) facilitate evidence-based suicide prevention programming, (2) implement 2-4 Mental Health Players performances, (3) increase the number of people served on the Peer-to-Peer Support Line and Teen Connect Support Line, and (4) provide ongoing training to improve the service quality of the warmlines.