Suicide in Ohio: Facts, Figures, and the Future
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Throughout the United States, suicide rates continue to rise across all ages, races, and genders. The national suicide rate has consistently risen since 2001, and in 2017 suicide claimed the lives of 47,173 people in the US–an average of 129 per day. For context, that is nearly two-and-a-half times the number of homicides in the same year (19,510).

This ongoing suicide crisis is likely to increase, as experts are predicting a surge of mental health needs related to the COVID-19 pandemic. A May 2020 Washington Post article cited exposure to death, living in isolation, and fear of the unknown as catalysts for increased psychological trauma, anxiety, and depression.

Recently released projections by the Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute estimate a 17% increase in deaths by suicide in Ohio for every 10% increase in the unemployment rate. This number is similar to results of a 2014 National Institute of Health-funded study by researchers at Rutgers University on the correlation between the Great Recession and increased suicides. The study found that for every percentage point increase in the unemployment rate, there was approximately a 1.6% increase in the suicide rate. With the unemployment rate rising to 16.8% in May 2020, an associated surge in suicides has the potential to be staggering.

Now is the time to change this trajectory, and to be successful, a clear picture of the issue is needed. *Suicide in Ohio: Facts, Figures, and the Future* is a series of reports developed by three Ohio-based organizations:

- The Mental Health & Addiction Advocacy Coalition (MHAC) has a membership of more than 120 organizations statewide, including health and human service agencies, faith based organizations, government and advocacy organizations, courts, major medical institutions, corporations, and behavioral health agencies. The MHAC's mission is to foster education and awareness of mental health and addiction issues while advocating for public policies and strategies that support effective, well-funded services, systems, and supports for those in need, resulting in stronger Ohio communities.

- The Ohio Alliance for Innovation in Population Health is a collaborative focused on improving the health of Ohioans. It collectively works to combine the resources and expertise of administrators, healthcare practitioners, academic researchers and policy experts from Ohio University and more than 30 affiliated universities, hospital associations, and healthcare providers to solve complex and pressing population health concerns.

- The Ohio Suicide Prevention Foundation (OSPF) acts as a catalyst and steward of statewide suicide prevention efforts by supporting community-based efforts to reduce stigma, promote education and awareness, and increase resources and programs to reduce the risk of suicide. It also works with stakeholders to implement the State of Ohio Suicide Prevention Plan.

Suicide in Ohio: Facts, Figures, and the Future provides readers with insight about deaths by suicide across Ohio, as well as the impact of and community responses to suicide in specific areas of Northeast and Southwest Ohio. The goal of this report is to provide information for policy makers, clinicians, and community leaders, so they will have the knowledge and motivation to take the necessary actions needed to increase a focus on suicide prevention, diminish the number of deaths by suicide, and provide relief for survivors.

Suicide in Ohio: Facts, Figures, and the Future has been released in three stand-alone installments:

Installment 1: An Overview and What State-level Data Tells Us

Installment 1 provides a high level look at the national suicide crisis, as well as specific demographic data related to suicides in Ohio. The report uses data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the National Institute of Mental Health, the National Center for Health Statistics, the Ohio Youth Risk Behavior Survey, and the Ohio Department of Health. Highlights of this installment include:

- National-level suicide overview including overall suicide death rates and rates by age and race, as well as a report on suicide attempts.

- Mental illness and substance use disorders as risk factors for suicide.

- Stigma related to suicide and how it increases isolation and acts as a barrier to seeking help.

- Suicide contagion, which occurs when exposure to suicide or suicidal behaviors results in an increase in suicide and suicidal behaviors.

- The prevalence of suicidal thoughts by youth.

- Ohio suicide data including the same categories as the national-level data, as well as data on time of year, days of the week, years of life lost, and county-level suicide rates.

Installments 2 and 3: Impact of Suicide and Current Responses in Northeast and Southwest Ohio

Installments 2 and 3 examine suicide death data at a regional, county, and township level to provide a deeper understanding of geographic trends and opportunities for targeted responses. Installment 2 highlights information about seven counties in Northeast Ohio – Cuyahoga, Geauga, Lake, Lorain, Medina, Portage, and Summit. Installment 3 provides the same information for six counties in Southwest Ohio – Brown, Butler, Clermont, Clinton, Hamilton, and Warren. Each installment also presents study data for the region including the following:

- Regional Data – This section compares suicide deaths within all counties in each region to the remainder of Ohio using demographics including gender, age, race, marital status, educational status, and suicide mechanism.

- County Comparison Data – This section compares suicide data among the counties in each region using the same demographics as used for the regional data.

- County Overviews and Data – This section contains overviews of individual counties that include details on county government structure, public funding for local mental health and addiction services, local hospital systems, mental health and addiction boards, crisis response, and suicide prevention coalitions. Each county overview also contains data at the township level.

The data contained in *Suicide in Ohio: Facts, Figures, and the Future* is meant to be used as a tool so that policymakers and other stakeholders can understand and effectively describe deaths by suicide in Ohio. The report can also be used to help develop effective responses at the local, state, and federal levels. An effective suicide response must include components like adequate funding at the state and local levels, suicide prevention plans and programming, mental health insurance parity, the training of primary care health professionals, and many more. It will take collaboration across systems to make this happen.

Are you struggling with suicidal thoughts? Are you worried about a friend or loved one and need support? You are not alone. Your life is worth fighting for.

- Get support by phone by calling the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 800-273-TALK (8255).

- Get support by text by texting *4hope* to the Crisis Text Line at 741 741.

- Get prepared with a safety plan by downloading the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline's free My3 app from the Apple Store or Google Play.

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6.2020