

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 2022, 49,476 Americans died by suicide. Here in New Jersey, 769 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 to provide services that will help improve mental health, the Mental Health Association (MHA) continues 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. In pursuit of shining a light on suicide prevention, increasing mental health literacy, and instilling hope in the community, the Suicide Prevention team facilitates numerous presentations, workshops, and groups. These suicide prevention workshops were taught in-person and through multimedia outlets (i.e., Zoom, Microsoft Teams, and Webex) in Essex, Passaic, Morris, and Sussex Counties to many people ranging from 3rd graders to older adults.

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 two youth suicide prevention websites:

StopTeenSuicide.mhainspire.org provides information on warning signs and practical ways to speak to a young person who has 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, coping strategies, and important resources in the event they are in a crisis.

Personnel: 1 Master’s Level Director, 1 Master’s Level Community Educator

Data and Highlights: The Suicide Prevention Services program has two suicide prevention websites. By the end of June 2024, the two teen suicide prevention landing pages have received **3,721 Pageviews**. Broken-down by page:

- stopteensuicide.mhainspire.org – **2,369 Pageviews**
- youarenotalone.mhainspire.org – **1,352 Pageviews**

The Gizmo program was delivered to over 100 students at Fernbrook Elementary School in Randolph, NJ and Cleveland Elementary School in Newark, NJ. *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

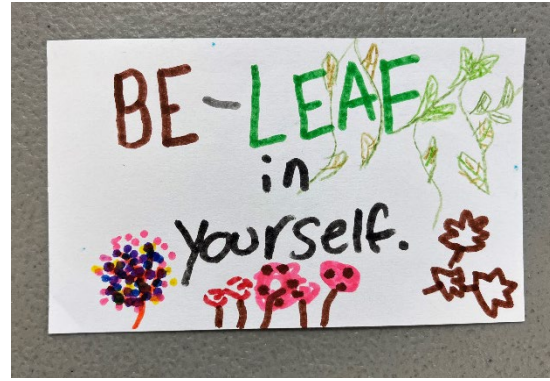
a time of need that can help them avert crisis.

The Signs of Suicide (SOS) Program was delivered to over 100 students at Fairview Camp in Newton, NJ, Newark Public Library, and East Side High School in Paterson, NJ. 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.

Since July of 2023, the Suicide Prevention team has taught 74 presentations to over 2,805 individuals which included police officers, the military community, adults in treatment for substance use, youth, teens with disabilities, faith-based communities, parents, teachers, support staff, community members, business professionals, and older adults. Presentations were given to the following communities: Morris County Crisis Intervention Training (CIT), Picatinny Arsenal, Silver Lake Hospital, Youth at Lakeland Hills YMCA and Sussex County YMCA, Notre Dame of Mt. Carmel Church, Grace Lutheran Church, Hope Institute, Beulah Grove Baptist Church, Sussex County Technical School, Montclair NAACP, Roxbury Library, Presbyterian Church of Chatham Township, Saint Clare's Hospital, Spiritual and Health-Based Leaders who work with Franciscan Friars, and Lawyers at Legal Services of Northwest Jersey.

This year, the Suicide Prevention team used an interactive, strength-based approach that includes mindfulness and art-based activities to support the mental health presentations, workshops, and group topics being taught to the community. 49 out of 74 presentations, workshops and groups included the integration of mindfulness and art-based activities. The Suicide Prevention team has training in embodied modalities (i.e., trauma-informed yoga and art therapy), which can be effective with connecting with all ages, especially youth. This is also a protective factor of mental health. Using embodied modalities: (1) helps to process, understand, and communicate complicated thoughts and emotions, (2) provides a constructive outlet for challenging emotions, (3) encourages self-expression and regulation, (4) engages the senses, feelings, and physical action, (5) helps one learn about different perspectives, and (6) can help nurture confidence and identity.

Using the Caring Partners of Morris & Sussex grant, the Suicide Prevention team engaged with over 100 youth in meaningful ways by (1) hosting Wellness Ninjas groups for middle and high school students, and (2) setting up resource tables with interactive activities at both YMCAs in Morris and Sussex Counties as well as some Morris County libraries. Groups consisted of (1) light movement in the form of gentle stretches (i.e., mountain, tree, and warrior pose), (2) breathing exercises (i.e., 4-square breathing, 4-7-8 breath, and alternate nostril breathing), and (3) art-based activities. The movement and breathing exercises helped youth learn practical ways to decrease stress and anxiety. Some of the art-based activities included: making personal affirmation cards (see images below), feelings transformation collage, and handmade rational and irrational thought boxes.



Mental Health Players

Description: Mental Health Players educate audiences through interactive role-plays to address important issues such as employment issues, staff conflicts, aging, drug/alcohol use, parent/child conflicts, and mental illness. Role-playing is an effective way to engage audiences and encourage interaction where lectures and other traditional methods of education can leave audiences cool and unresponsive. Performances last approximately 45 minutes, consist of 2 role-plays, and can be scheduled during the day or evening.

Personnel: 40 Volunteers, 1 Master's Level Director, 1 Master's Level Community Educator

Data and Highlights: Due to lack of requests from the community, there were no performances by the Mental Health Players in the 2023-2024 fiscal year. The Suicide Prevention team will assess how to proceed with this educational service.

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 can call using three separate lines in the evening and one during the weekday to receive peer counseling support services by trained staff.

Personnel: 19 Peer Line Staff, 1 Master's Level Director, 1 Master's Level Community Educator

Data and Highlights: The Peer-to-Peer Support Line provided hope, encouragement and resources to 233 people during 6,078 hours of calls to the Peer-to-Peer Support Line. Although most of these calls came from New Jersey, some came from out of the state (i.e., California, Connecticut, Florida, Hawaii, Kansas, Maryland, Massachusetts, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Texas, and Virginia).

Outcome: 95% of callers report their satisfaction with Peer-to-Peer Support Line.

Outcome: 86% 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 staffed by young people for young people. The target population to be served is youth ages 13-24 years old. Teen Connect staff provide coverage on 2 lines (1 call, 1 text) Monday – Friday from 5pm-10pm. 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 adolescents experiencing challenges (i.e., anxiety, depression, grief, anger, loneliness, etc.) 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, 1 Master’s Level Director, 1 Master’s Level Community Educator

Data and Highlights: In the 2023-2024 fiscal year, the Teen Connect Line has provided hope, encouragement and resources to 32 young people during 2,575 hours of calls and texts to the Teen Connect Line.