

# A Preventable Public Health Threat

**“Suicide** is a huge but largely preventable public health problem, causing almost half of all violent deaths and resulting in almost one million fatalities every year, as well as economic costs in the billions of dollars. Estimates suggest fatalities could rise to 1.5 million by 2020.”  
– *World Health Organization*

## Today:

- ❖ An American dies by suicide every 16 minutes.
- ❖ 1.8 million Americans attempt suicide each year.
- ❖ 90% of people who die by suicide have a treatable mental illness or substance abuse disorder.
- ❖ Suicide rates are highest among Americans 75 and older.
- ❖ Suicide is the 3<sup>rd</sup> leading cause of death for youth ages 15–24.
- ❖ Suicide is the 2<sup>nd</sup> leading cause of death for adults ages 25–34.
- ❖ 80% of suicide deaths are among men

SOURCE: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention ([www.CDC.gov](http://www.CDC.gov))  
National Institute of Mental Health ([www.NIMH.gov](http://www.NIMH.gov))  
Suicide Prevention Action Network USA ([www.SPANUSA.org](http://www.SPANUSA.org))  
Kessler, R.C. et al. Journal of the American Medical Association, 2005.

## The Cost:

- ❖ In one year, suicide cost the U.S. \$13 billion in lost earnings.
- ❖ 1.3 million years of potential life lost to suicide annually.
- ❖ Suicide attempts requiring hospitalization cost the U.S. \$3.8 billion each year.
- ❖ The average cost of completed suicides in Florida from 1999- 2003 was \$2.2 billion

SOURCE: Knox, K.L. et al. American Journal of Public Health, 2005  
National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, WISQARS  
Suicide Prevention Resource Center ([www.SPRC.org](http://www.SPRC.org))

## Research Saves Lives and Money

- NIH - Funded researchers found that older depressed patients have fewer suicidal thoughts and improve faster when their primary care doctors are educated about depression treatment and a depression care manager oversees their treatment.
- High school students showed a 40% drop in suicide attempts after participating in the Signs of Suicide Program, which screens teens for depression and teaches them to recognize and respond to teens needing help.
- Researchers at the National Institute of Mental Health demonstrated that over 20 years, the U.S. saved more than \$70 billion in medical costs and lost productivity due to suicide by using lithium to treat patients with bipolar disorder.
- For each suicide prevented, the U.S. could save an average of 1,182, 559 in medical expenses and lost productivity.

SOURCE: Bruce, M.L. et al. Journal of the American Medical Association, 2004.  
Aseltine, R.H. and Demartino, R. American Journal of Public Health, 2004.  
Wyatt, R.J. et al. Psychiatric Quarterly, 2001.  
Suicide Prevention Resource Center ([www.SPRC.org](http://www.SPRC.org))

## Prevention Programs Work

The U.S. Air Force was experiencing an annual rate of 15.8 suicide deaths per 100,000 of its 350,000-person community, the highest of all U.S. armed forces, before developing and implementing its community-based suicide prevention program in 1995. Subsequently, the suicide rate fell 79 percent to less than 3.5 suicide deaths per 100,000 in 1999. The Air Force program is replicable in existing communities and corporations. The result can be a demonstrable reduction in emotional, physical, and financial toll of depression and suicide, lost productivity, and absenteeism; and costs of operations and medical benefits.

SOURCE: [www.VALUEOPTIONS.com](http://www.VALUEOPTIONS.com)

For more information, please visit [www.spanusa.org](http://www.spanusa.org).

BY THE STATEWIDE OFFICE OF SUICIDE PREVENTION,  
FLORIDA OFFICE OF DRUG CONTROL