FAITH COMMUNITIES AND SUICIDE PREVENTION

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Family Service, Inc.
Thanks

- We thank Lilly and the Association of Theological Schools for the grant that is supporting this webinar and the study on Clergy Engagement with Suicide Intervention and Aftercare
Disclaimer and Goals

• **We will not be training you on how to assess suicide risk or treat a suicidal person.**
• We will help you
  • Understand factors that may contribute to suicide and the role of faith communities.
  • Generate information-gathering questions to ask a suicidal person so that you can refer and provide that information to another professional.
  • Gain awareness of resources for suicidal people and for further training.
SUICIDE EPIDEMIOLOGY: A TRAGIC PUBLIC HEALTH PROBLEM

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Alcohol and Drug Abuse Research Center
McLean Hospital/Harvard Medical School
Total Number of Suicide Deaths, USA

- 1999: 29,199
- 2000: 29,350
- 2001: 30,622
- 2002: 31,655
- 2003: 31,484
- 2004: 32,439
- 2005: 32,637
- 2006: 33,300
- 2007: 34,598
- 2008: 36,035
- 2009: 36,909

CDC
## 10 Leading Causes of Death, USA, 2009

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>&lt;1</th>
<th>1-4</th>
<th>5-9</th>
<th>10-14</th>
<th>15-24</th>
<th>25-34</th>
<th>35-44</th>
<th>45-54</th>
<th>55-64</th>
<th>65+</th>
<th>All ages</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Congenital Anomalies 5,319</td>
<td>Unintentional Injury 1,466</td>
<td>Unintentional Injury 773</td>
<td>Unintentional Injury 916</td>
<td>Unintentional Injury 12,458</td>
<td>Unintentional Injury 14,062</td>
<td>Unintentional Injury 15,102</td>
<td>Malignant Neoplasms 50,616</td>
<td>Malignant Neoplasms 106,829</td>
<td>Heart Disease 479,150</td>
<td>Heart Disease 599,413</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Short Gestation 4,538</td>
<td>Congenital Anomalies 464</td>
<td>Malignant Neoplasms 477</td>
<td>Malignant Neoplasms 419</td>
<td>Homicide 4,862</td>
<td>Suicide 5,320</td>
<td>Malignant Neoplasms 12,519</td>
<td>Heart Disease 36,927</td>
<td>Heart Disease 67,261</td>
<td>Malignant Neoplasms 391,035</td>
<td>Malignant Neoplasms 567,628</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>SIDS 2,226</td>
<td>Homicide 376</td>
<td>Congenital Anomalies 195</td>
<td>Suicide 259</td>
<td>Suicide 4,371</td>
<td>Homicide 4,222</td>
<td>Heart Disease 11,081</td>
<td>Unintentional Injury 19,974</td>
<td>Chronic Low. Respiratory Disease 14,160</td>
<td>Chronic Low. Respiratory Disease 117,098</td>
<td>Chronic Low. Respiratory Disease 137,353</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Maternal Pregnancy Comp. 1,608</td>
<td>Malignant Neoplasms 350</td>
<td>Homicide 119</td>
<td>Homicide 186</td>
<td>Malignant Neoplasms 1,636</td>
<td>Malignant Neoplasms 3,659</td>
<td>Suicide 6,677</td>
<td>Suicide 8,598</td>
<td>Unintentional Injury 12,933</td>
<td>Cerebrovascular 109,238</td>
<td>Cerebrovascular 128,842</td>
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<td>Unintentional Injury 1,181</td>
<td>Heart Disease 154</td>
<td>Influenza &amp; Pneumonia 106</td>
<td>Congenital Anomalies 169</td>
<td>Heart Disease 1,035</td>
<td>Heart Disease 3,174</td>
<td>Homicide 2,762</td>
<td>Liver Disease 8,377</td>
<td>Diabetes Mellitus 11,361</td>
<td>Alzheimer’s Disease 78,168</td>
<td>Unintentional Injury 118,021</td>
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<td>Placenta Cord Membranes 1,064</td>
<td>Influenza &amp; Pneumonia 146</td>
<td>Heart Disease 97</td>
<td>Influenza &amp; Pneumonia 122</td>
<td>Congenital Anomalies 457</td>
<td>HIV 881</td>
<td>Liver Disease 2,481</td>
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<td>Cerebrovascular 10,523</td>
<td>Diabetes Mellitus 48,944</td>
<td>Alzheimer’s Disease 79,003</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Bacterial Sepsis 652</td>
<td>Septicemia 71</td>
<td>Chronic Low. Respiratory Disease 64</td>
<td>Heart Disease 120</td>
<td>Influenza &amp; Pneumonia 418</td>
<td>Influenza &amp; Pneumonia 807</td>
<td>HIV 2,425</td>
<td>Diabetes Mellitus 5,725</td>
<td>Liver Disease 9,154</td>
<td>Influenza &amp; Pneumonia 43,469</td>
<td>Diabetes Mellitus 68,705</td>
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<td>Respiratory Distress 595</td>
<td>Chronic Low. Respiratory Disease 66</td>
<td>Benign Neoplasms 40</td>
<td>Chronic Low. Respiratory Disease 59</td>
<td>Complicated Pregnancy 227</td>
<td>Diabetes Mellitus 604</td>
<td>Cerebrovascular 1,916</td>
<td>Chronic Low. Respiratory Disease 4,664</td>
<td>Suicide 5,808</td>
<td>Nephritis 40,465</td>
<td>Influenza &amp; Pneumonia 53,692</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Circulatory System Disease 501</td>
<td>Perinatal Period 58</td>
<td>Septicemia 33</td>
<td>Benign Neoplasms 45</td>
<td>Cerebrovascular 193</td>
<td>Cerebrovascular 537</td>
<td>Diabetes Mellitus 1,872</td>
<td>HIV 3,388</td>
<td>Nephritis 4,792</td>
<td>Unintentional Injury 39,111</td>
<td>Nephritis 48,935</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Neonatal Hemorrhage 517</td>
<td>Benign Neoplasms 53</td>
<td>Cerebrovascular 32</td>
<td>Cerebrovascular 42</td>
<td>Chronic Low. Respiratory Disease 187</td>
<td>Liver Disease 459</td>
<td>Influenza &amp; Pneumonia 1,314</td>
<td>Influenza &amp; Pneumonia 2,918</td>
<td>Septicemia 4,628</td>
<td>Septicemia 26,763</td>
<td>Suicide 36,909</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Total Number of Suicide Deaths, by age, USA, 2009
Number of Suicide Deaths, by gender, USA, 2009

- Males: 29,073
- Females: 7,818
Suicide Deaths, by age & gender, USA, 2009
Number of Suicide Deaths, by gender & race, USA, 2009
Suicide deaths, by method, USA, 2009

- Males
  - Firearms
  - Poisoning
  - Suffocation
  - Other

- Females
  - Firearms
  - Poisoning
  - Suffocation
  - Other

- Total
  - Firearms
  - Poisoning
  - Suffocation
  - Other
Nonfatal Self-Harm, by gender, USA, 2010
Nonfatal Self-Harm, by age, USA, 2010

Rate per 100,000

Number
Crude Rate

Nonfatal Self-Harm, by gender & age, USA, 2010

The chart presents data on nonfatal self-harm by gender and age in the USA for the year 2010. The x-axis represents age groups ranging from 10-19 years to 60-69 years, while the y-axis indicates the number of cases, ranging from 0 to 140,000.

The chart includes bars for Total, Female, and Male for each age group. The y-axis values are marked at intervals of 20,000 (0, 20,000, 40,000, 60,000, 80,000, 100,000, 120,000, 140,000).

Key observations:
- The 20-29 age group shows the highest number of nonfatal self-harm cases for both Total and Female populations.
- The Male population has significantly lower numbers compared to Total and Female in most age groups.
- The 60-69 age group has the lowest number of cases across all genders.

The chart effectively demonstrates the distribution and prevalence of nonfatal self-harm across different genders and age groups in the USA for 2010.
Substance Abuse and Suicide, USA, 2009, NVDRS (16 states)

Percent of Suicide Deaths with Substance Problems

- No Known Substance Problems
- Other Substances
- Alcohol Dependence
Q&A
WHY FAITH COMMUNITIES?

Karen Mason, Ph.D.
Psychologist/Associate Professor of Counseling and Psychology
Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary
Faith Communities and Suicide Prevention

• *The National Strategy for Suicide Prevention: Goals and Objectives or Action* recognizes faith communities as having a key role in suicide prevention.


Clergy are contacted by suicidal folks

- Surveys by the National Institute of Mental Health found that clergy are equally likely to be contacted for help as mental health professionals by a person with a major mental health diagnosis.

Clergy are contacted by suicidal folks

- Approximately 25% of the National Comorbidity Survey sample of persons with all types of mental health disorders contacted clergy for help. … Suicidal ideation, plans or attempts were some of the significant predictors of making contact. In fact, suicidal persons who sought treatment were as likely to contact the clergy as other providers.

Clergy are frontline caregivers

• Clergy report being contacted by a suicidal person about 1 per year.
• For example, one clergy said, “Within the first week of my being [at my first church] a woman called me, said she was sitting at her home and she had a razor blade beside her, and she didn’t see any reason to live anymore, and that was like day two or three on the job.”

Theological Questions about Suicide

• Why doesn’t God give me joy?
• Is suicide a sin?
• Will a person who dies by suicide spend eternity in Hell?
• Why couldn’t I protect my son or daughter?

Some faith communities have developed a position on suicide

- The General Council of Assemblies of God
- Catechism of the Catholic Church
- The Church Council of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
- The Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America
- A 2008 interfaith statement called “A Consensus Statement on Suicide and Suicide Prevention”
- The United Church of Christ 22nd General Synod
- The United Methodist Church
Religiosity protects against Suicide

- Religiosity is a known protective factor for suicide, a factor that reduces the risk of suicide
  
  Brenner, Homaifar, Adler, Wolfman & Kemp, 2009; Dervic et al., 2004; Dervic et al., 2011

- Religiosity has been found to be used to cope with suicidal thoughts
  
  Alexander, Haugland, Ashenden, Knight, & Brown, 2009; Weaver & Koenig, 1996
Ministry of Presence and community

• One clergy described what she offers suicidal people: “I think it would probably be more of a supportive presence, a spiritual listening, than actual in-depth kind of counseling.”


• One of my (Mason) non-church-going clients says she’s alive today because she joined a ladies’ group at her sibling’s church.

• Refer for mental health treatment
Q&A
VIGNETTES

Karen Mason, Ph.D.
Psychologist/Associate Professor of Counseling and Psychology
Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary

James D. Wines, Jr., M.D., M.P.H.
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Debbie Helms, B.S.
Program Coordinator
Samaritans of Merrimack Valley
Family Service, Inc.
Vignette #1: Linda

- Linda calls you and says that her husband just walked out on her. She is crying hysterically. After you talk with her, she calms down and tells you that she was so angry she thought about killing herself just to show her husband.
Vote: What will you ask Linda?

• You’re not seriously thinking of killing yourself, right?
• Do you think you would follow up on this thought of killing yourself to get back at your husband? Today? Have you thought of ways that you might hurt yourself?
• Have you thought about suicide before? Have you made a plan and attempted suicide before?
• I’m concerned for you. Are you feeling depressed?
• I’m here to help. Do you mind sharing with me your reasons to live?
Vignette #2: Bernice

- Bernice tells you in confidence that she’s been depressed since a date rape about 6 months ago. She still feels too ashamed to tell any of her other friends or family what happened and she wonders why God let this happen. She looks depressed and when you ask, she says that her primary care doctor started her on an antidepressant last week. She tells you that, when she was 12, when her parents were going through a divorce, she tried cutting her legs a few times, but she stopped because it didn’t help. She goes on to say that she has some upsetting suicidal thoughts some days.
Vote: What will you ask Bernice?

• You’ve had some pretty difficult things happen to you. Can you tell me how you’ve been handling this trauma during the last 6 months? Have you talked to rape counselors?
• When you were younger and cutting yourself, did you think about suicide back then? Did you ever make a plan or decide on how you would kill yourself?
• It takes courage to get help for depression. Besides the antidepressant, are you also talking with a therapist? Have you ever considered this as an option?
• I want you to know that you are not alone. I care about what’s going on with you. Let’s talk about the ways we can help you deal with this trauma.
• You mentioned you were experiencing some “suicidal thoughts” recently. Can you tell me more about those thoughts?
Vignette #3: David

- David calls you and says he is struggling with his wife’s death from breast cancer a year ago today. He wonders why God didn’t heal her. As he continues to talk, you realize that he seems depressed and doesn’t seem to look forward to the future. He keeps saying, “I can’t imagine life without Jane.” As you continue to question him, you find out that he has a gun next to him and he plans to kill himself after hanging up the phone unless you can give him a reason to live.
Vote: What will you ask David?

- David, please put the gun away. I have a hard time concentrating on how to help you when I know there is a gun there.
- It must be very hard for you since your wife passed away. Tell me about her.
- Let’s talk about how you’re feeling – alone, depressed, hopeless.
- I know you will find this hard to believe but there are a number of resources to help you with your grief. Let’s talk about which ones might work for you.
- Let’s talk about how you’ve coped during this first year and see if we can give you a lot of reasons to live and feel hopeful again.
Q&A
RESOURCES

Debbie Helms, B.S.
Executive Coordinator
Samaritans of Merrimack Valley
Family Service, Inc.
Help Lines

- Google: “Suicide crisis lines in [name of state]”
- Samaritans of Merrimack Valley
  - Toll Free: 1-866-912-4673
  - Local: 978-327-6607
  - Teen Line: 978-688-TEEN (8336)
- Samaritans Statewide help line
  - Toll Free: 1-866-870-4673
- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline
  - Toll Free: 1-800-273-TALK (8255)
  - Press 1 or say Veteran for the Veterans help line
- The Dougy Center
  - 1-866-775-5683 (support for children grieving the death of someone)
- The Trevor Project
  - 1-866-488-7386 (support for GLBTQ youth)
- Compassionate Friends – 1-877-969-1000 (on line support for the loss of a child)
Websites

- Google: “State suicide prevention efforts in [name of state]”
- Samaritans of Merrimack Valley: [www.familyserviceinc.com/Samaritans](http://www.familyserviceinc.com/Samaritans)
- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: [www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org](http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org)
- S.A.V.E. – Statewide Empowerment for Veterans’ Advocacy: [www.mass.gov/veterans](http://www.mass.gov/veterans)
- Mass. Coalition for Suicide Prevention: [www.masspreventssuicide.org](http://www.masspreventssuicide.org)
- National Alliance of Mental Illness: [www.namimass.org](http://www.namimass.org)
- American Foundation for Suicide Prevention: [www.afsp.org](http://www.afsp.org)
- American Association of Suicidology: [www.suiciodology.org](http://www.suiciodology.org)
- Suicide Prevention Resource Center: [www.sprc.org](http://www.sprc.org)
- The Trevor Project: [www.thetrevorproject.org](http://www.thetrevorproject.org)
Books and Literature

- How I Stayed Alive While My Brain was Trying to Kill Me – Susan Rose Blauner, 2002, Harper Collins Publishers Inc.
- The Role of Faith Communities in Preventing Suicide: a Report of an Interfaith Suicide Prevention Dialogue - 2009, Suicide Prevention Resource Center, Newton, MA: Education Development Center, Inc.
Survivors of Suicide Loss Resources

• Samaritans of Merrimack Valley –1-866-912-4673 or 978-327-6671; teen line – 978-688-8336 – Massachusetts has over 12 support groups for survivors.
• Samaritans Statewide Help line – 1-877-870-4673
• National Suicide Prevention Lifeline – 1-800-273-TALK (8255)
• Hospice of North Shore – 978-774-7566*
• Merrimack Valley Hospice – 978-470-1615*
• The Children’s Room – 781-641-4741*
• Compassionate Friends – 1-877-969-0010

*Grief support groups not specific to suicide deaths
Survivors of Suicide Loss Resources

• Samaritans of Merrimack Valley: [www.familyserviceinc.com/Samaritans](http://www.familyserviceinc.com/Samaritans)
• Mass. Coalition for Suicide Prevention: [www.masspreventssuicide.org](http://www.masspreventssuicide.org)
• Hospice of North Shore: [www.hns.org](http://www.hns.org)*
• Merrimack Valley Hospice: [www.merrimackvalleyhospice.org](http://www.merrimackvalleyhospice.org)*
• The Children’s Room: [www.childrensroom.org](http://www.childrensroom.org)*
• Compassionate Friends: [www.compassionatefriends.org](http://www.compassionatefriends.org)*
• The Dougy Group: [www.dougy.org](http://www.dougy.org)*
• Survivors of Suicide: [www.survivorsofsuicide.org](http://www.survivorsofsuicide.org)
• Survivor Support for Military and Veterans: [www.taps.org](http://www.taps.org)
• National Alliance on Mental Illness: [www.namima.org](http://www.namima.org)
• American Foundation for Suicide Prevention: [www.afsp.org](http://www.afsp.org)
• American Association of Suicidology: [www.suicidology.org](http://www.suicidology.org)
• Suicide Prevention Resource Center: [www.sprc.org](http://www.sprc.org)
Survivors of Suicide Loss Resources

**MUSIC FOR SURVIVORS**
- Before Their Time – [www.beforetheirtimeworld.org](http://www.beforetheirtimeworld.org)
- Chaos of the Heart – [www.musicforthesoul.org](http://www.musicforthesoul.org)

**BOOKS FOR SURVIVORS**
- No Time To Say Goodbye: Surviving the Suicide of a Loved One by Carla Fine
- After Suicide Loss: Coping with Your Grief by Bob Baugher and Jack Jordan
- Suicide Survivors Handbook by Trudy Carlson
- Survivors of Suicide by Rita Robinson and Phyllis Hart
- After Suicide: a Workbook for Grieving Kids available through the Dougy Group
- Someone I Love Died by Suicide: A Story for Child Survivors and Those Who Care for Them by Doreen Cammarata
- My Son, My Son by Iris Bolton
- After a Suicide: Recommendations for Religious Services and Other Public Memorial Observances: Suicide Prevention Resource Center, 2004, Newton, MA: Education Development Center, Inc.
Trainings

• SOS – Signs of Suicide – 90 minute online training or can be conducted on site – www.mentalhealthscreening.org

• QPR – Question, Persuade and Refer – can be done online or in person – www.qprinstitute.com

• ASIST – Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training – 2 day workshop in person – www.livingworks.net

• Connect Suicide Prevention Project – 3 to 3 ½ hour on site trainings for both suicide attempts and threats as well as after a suicide death. Discipline specific for clergy.
  In Massachusetts, contact Debbie Helms at 978-327-6671 or at dhelms@familyserviceinc.com – For all other states, contact knorton@naminh.org

• Suicide Prevention Resource Center – Has a number of online trainings – http://training.sprc.org
Q&A

- Resources
- Over the webinar
Thank You for Participating Today

• Slides will be emailed to you after today’s webinar.
• A List of Resources are on the GCTS website at http://www.gordonconwell.edu/academics/documents/clergy-engagement-handout.pdf
• Study results will be available sometime next fall.
Contact us

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  - 978-646-4042

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