


## An Introduction to Suicide Prevention

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ABOUT AFSP

Our Mission

## Save Lives and Bring Hope to Those Affected by Suicide



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ABOUT AFSP

## AFSP Today

- Is the leading national non-profit organization dedicated to suicide prevention; sustainable and fast-growing
- Is evidence-informed and driven by science
- Engages those personally affected, mental health professionals and community leaders
- Has invested over \$30 million per year in research, education, advocacy and support for those affected by suicide



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## ABOUT AFSP

## What AFSP Is Not

- AFSP is **NOT** a crisis center
- AFSP does **NOT** run its own support groups
- AFSP Chapters are **NOT** support groups
- AFSP does **NOT** make grants to other organizations

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## HOW WE FIGHT

## Our Work

- |                                 |                                   |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| • Research Connection           | • Out of the Darkness™ Walks      |
| • Prevention Education          | • Communications & Marketing      |
| • Loss & Healing                | • Project 2025                    |
| • Advocacy & Public Policy      | • Community Engagement (Chapters) |
| • Interactive Screening Program | • Workplace                       |

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## AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

## Our Chapter

In 2021 the Alabama Chapter:

- Hosted nearly 280 attendees through 19 virtual and in-person prevention education sessions including AFSP 101, *More Than Sad*, *Talk Saves Lives*, *Talk Saves Lives-LGBTQ+*, *Talk Saves Lives for Presenters*, *Enhancing Mental Health During COVID-19*, *It's Real: College Students and Mental Health*, and *Gizmo's Pawesome Guide to Mental Health*®.
- Distributed over 3,300 educational and resource materials to individuals and organizations for use at events and activities. Reached 460 individuals through presentations about AFSP and tabling events.
- Hosted a virtual Alabama State Capitol Day with more than 24 attendees.
- Had 50 individuals register to attend one of four statewide in-person International Survivors of Suicide Loss Day.
- Had more than 2,700 individuals throughout Alabama unite to be a voice for suicide prevention - raising over \$257,000 through our statewide spring campus walk, the Alabama Hike for Hope and our statewide *Out of the Darkness* Walks.




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**Suicide can  
be prevented.**

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**How we talk  
about suicide  
matters.**

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**HOW WE TALK**

**Language Do's and Don'ts**

**Avoid Saying**

- x "Committed suicide"
- x "Failed" or "successful" attempt

**Say**

- ✓ "Died by suicide"
- ✓ "Ended their life"
- ✓ "Killed themselves"
- ✓ "Suicide attempt" or "death by suicide"

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**Scope of  
the Problem**

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SCOPE OF THE PROBLEM



**An estimated  
703,000 people  
die by suicide  
worldwide each  
year.**

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SCOPE OF THE PROBLEM



**Suicide is the 12<sup>th</sup>  
leading cause of  
death in the United  
States.**

In 2020, 45,979 Americans died  
by suicide.

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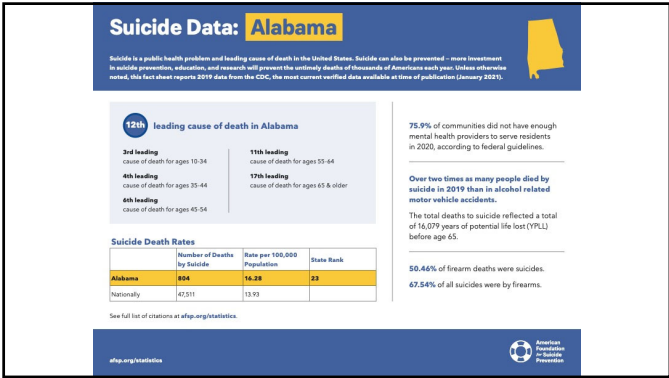
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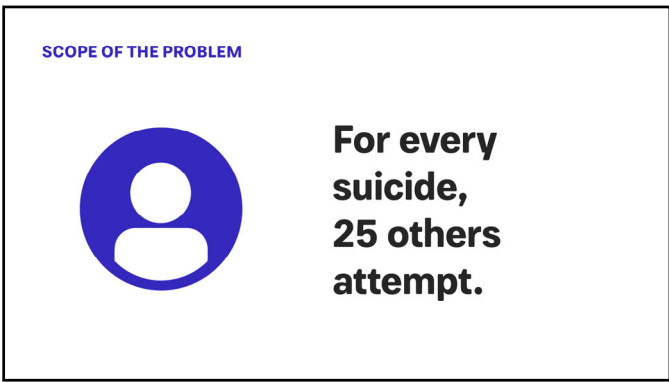
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HOW WE FIGHT

## Research Priorities

- Fund new research through our research grants program
- Recruit, train, and gather researchers to create a research community
- Share findings with a general audience to spread understanding



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HOW WE FIGHT

## Funding New Research

**AFSP is the largest private funder of suicide prevention research.**

- Current total investment is \$23.7M, including \$6.44M for 37 new grants
- Much of what is known about suicide comes from AFSP funded studies, many of which have supported the world's leading suicide prevention researchers
- Grant applications are reviewed by our Scientific Council of over 200 leading suicide prevention researchers
- Research priority areas include diversity, technology and survivors of suicide loss



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HOW WE FIGHT

## Building a Research Community and Sharing Findings

- Our scientific newsletters and web-based training series help develop the next generation of researchers
- We gather top experts in suicide prevention at events such as the International Summit on Suicide Research
- Our Research Connection Program brings researchers to local communities to share their findings
- We spread groundbreaking findings through our library of research videos



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RESEARCH



## Why do people take their own lives?

There is no single cause, but rather multiple intersecting factors.

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RESEARCH



**The large majority of people who die by suicide have a mental health condition contributing to their death.**

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RESEARCH



**1 in 4 people will experience a mental health condition, and most do not go on to die by suicide.**

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## RESEARCH



## Physical Differences

The brains of people who die by suicide differ from those who die from other causes in both structure and function.

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## RESEARCH



**Most people who are suicidal are ambivalent about taking their life.**

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## RESEARCH



## The Perspective of a Suicidal Person

- Crisis point has been reached
- Desperate to escape pain
- Thinking becomes limited

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RESEARCH



## Who is at risk?

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RESEARCH

## Risk Factors



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RESEARCH

## Health Factors

### Mental Health Conditions

- Depression
- Bipolar disorder
- Anxiety disorders
- Eating disorders
- Personality disorders
- Psychosis
- PTSD
- Substance use disorders



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**RESEARCH****Other Health Factors**

- Serious or chronic health conditions
- Chronic pain
- Serious head injuries




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**RESEARCH****Historical Factors**

- Family history of suicide
- Family history of mental health conditions
- Childhood abuse
- Previous suicide attempts
- Loss




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**RESEARCH****Environmental Factors**

- Access to lethal means
- Exposure/contagion
- Prolonged stress
- Stressful life event




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RESEARCH

What others see:



What they may not know:

-  Genetic risk
-  Depression
-  Prolonged stress at work
-  Drinking more than usual

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RESEARCH

### The Importance of Research

 Biomarkers

 Interventions

 Psychotherapies

 Medication

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Prevention

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HOW WE FIGHT

## Prevention Education


Through educational programs such as **Talk Saves Lives™** and **It's Real: College Students and Mental Health**, we teach schools, communities and workplaces how to best prevent suicide.




**TALK SAVES LIVES**  
An Introduction to Suicide Prevention



**IT'S REAL**  
COLLEGE STUDENTS AND MENTAL HEALTH



**MORE THAN SAD**



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HOW WE FIGHT

## Prevention Education Programs

To learn more about the 20+ AFSP and Partnership programs including recommended audience, planning timeline and how to access materials, please review the **Prevention Education Program Menu**.



**Prevention Education Program Menu**



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HOW WE FIGHT

## Project 2025

A nationwide initiative to reduce the annual U.S. suicide rate **20 percent by 2025**

**PROJECT 2025**

**AFSP.ORG/PROJECT2025**



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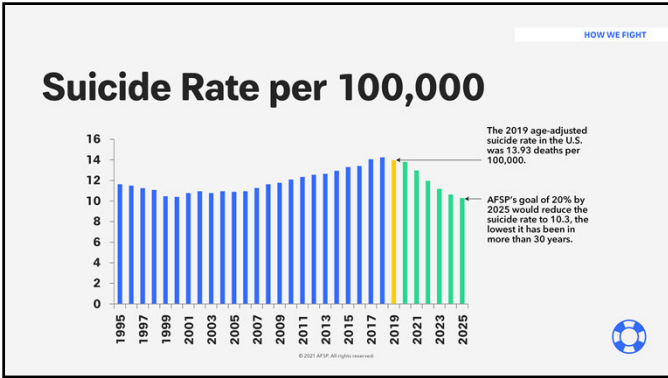
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HOW WE FIGHT

## About Project 2025

With guidance from leading advisors in the field and dynamic data modeling, AFSP has determined the programs, policies and interventions that will save the most lives in the shortest amount of time. Project 2025 is a collaborative effort to implement and scale these suicide prevention strategies nationwide in these **four critical areas**:

- Firearms
- Healthcare Systems (Primary Care & Behavioral Health)
- Emergency Departments
- Corrections System

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PREVENTION

## Protective Factors

- Mental health care
- Problem-solving skills
- Family and community support
- Cultural and religious beliefs

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PREVENTION



**Mental health care  
is an important  
ingredient for  
preventing suicide.**

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PREVENTION

## Being Proactive About Mental Health

**Make mental health a priority.**

- See a doctor or mental health professional
- Get an evaluation
- Discuss treatment options
- Find what works best for the individual

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PREVENTION



**The law requires  
insurance plans to  
cover mental health  
services the same  
as physical health  
services.**

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PREVENTION


## Self Care Strengthens Mental Health




Exercise



Healthy diet



Sleep



Stress management

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PREVENTION



## Support for loss survivors and those with lived experience.

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HOW WE FIGHT

## Loss & Healing

Hundreds of **International Survivor of Suicide Loss Day** events are organized and held in the U.S. and around the world, in which survivors of suicide loss come together to find connection, understanding and hope through their shared experience.


All of our trained **Healing Conversations** volunteers have experienced suicide loss themselves and can provide guidance and empathy and share useful community resources for ongoing support. Available to speak in person, on the phone or by video chat.



**International Survivors of Suicide Loss Day**



**Healing Conversations**  
Personal support for suicide loss



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PREVENTION



**The most important  
thing you can put  
between a suicidal  
person and their  
way of ending their  
life is time.**

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PREVENTION



**Limiting access  
to means  
prevents suicide.**

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PREVENTION

## Limiting Access to Means



CO sensors in cars



Barriers on bridges



Blister packaging for  
medication



Secure firearms

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# What You Can Do

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SUPPORT



# Have a Conversation

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HOW WE FIGHT

# Samples of Communications & Marketing Materials



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**SUPPORT**

  
**Watch for the warning signs**

  
**Reach out**

  
**Seek help**

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**SUPPORT**

**Suicide Warning Signs**

  
**Talk**

  
**Behavior**

  
**Mood**

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**SUPPORT**

**Talk**

- Ending their lives
- Having no reason to live
- Being a burden to others
- Feeling trapped
- Unbearable pain

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SUPPORT

## Behavior

- Increased use of alcohol or drugs
- Isolating from family and friends
- Issues with sleep
- Looking for a way to kill themselves
- Acting recklessly
- Giving away possessions
- Withdrawing from activities



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SUPPORT

## Mood

- Depression
- Apathy
- Rage
- Irritability
- Impulsivity
- Humiliation
- Anxiety



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SUPPORT



## Trust your gut.

Assume you're the only one who is going to reach out.

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SUPPORT

## How to Reach Out

- Talk to them in private
- Listen to their story
- Express concern and caring
- Ask directly about suicidal thoughts
  - Are you thinking of ending your life?
- Encourage them to seek mental health services

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SUPPORT



**Avoid minimizing their feelings.**

**Avoid trying to convince them life is worth living.**

**Avoid advice to fix it.**

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SUPPORT

**If you think they might make an attempt soon:**



**Stay with them**



**Help them secure or remove lethal means**



**Escort them to mental health services**

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SUPPORT



**For Emergencies  
Call 911**

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SUPPORT



**Suicide Prevention  
Lifeline:  
Call 1-800-273-TALK  
  
Crisis Text Line:  
Text TALK to 741741**

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ADVOCACY EFFORTS



In October 2020, the federal *National Suicide Hotline Designation Act* ([S. 2661](#)) became law. This was a historic victory for the suicide prevention community and a national recognition of the importance of responding to suicide and mental health crises.

Coming soon thanks to national and state  
advocacy efforts

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AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

## Our Chapter



**Become a Field Advocate**

By signing up as an AFSP Field Advocate, you will become a vital part of a large grassroots movement of people who are speaking out for suicide prevention and mental health at all levels of government.

You will receive monthly email updates from our public policy office alerting you to the legislation and policies that need your support.



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AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

## Our Chapter




**American Foundation for Suicide Prevention**

June 11, Red Mountain Park Birmingham  
[afsp.org/alhike/](https://afsp.org/alhike/)



Upcoming Campus Walks:  
Athens State University, April 9  
University of Alabama Huntsville, April 24  
Southside High School, May 7

Fall 2022 Walks:  
Birmingham, November 6  
Dothan, October 9  
Huntsville  
Montgomery  
Shoals  
South Alabama, October 23  
Tuscaloosa



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SUPPORT



**We can create a culture that's smart about mental health and suicide prevention.**

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Reach out to Area Director,  
Jennifer Hall, at  
[jhall@afsp.org](mailto:jhall@afsp.org)  
**@afspnational**  
[afsp.org/TalkSavesLives](https://afsp.org/TalkSavesLives)



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