



**SUICIDE
PREVENTION
MONTH
TOOLKIT**

2024

**A GUIDE WITH RESOURCES TO
SUPPORT SUICIDE PREVENTION IN
YOUR COMMUNITY**

CREATED BY

VOICES FOR PREVENTION GEORGIA
WWW.V4PGA.ORG

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Director's Message	1
History of Suicide Prevention Month	3
Changing the Narrative	4
What Actions Can I Take?	6
Community Based Strategies	10
Common Myths About Suicide	15
Additional Resources	17
Upcoming Events	19



DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

Hi, I am Ester Lopez, the Project Director for Voices for Prevention in Georgia. As a life-long advocate for prevention in the lives of youth, I know the issues so many communities face. I am in the trenches with you and want to be a conduit of information and impact for you and the communities you serve. This guide was designed with you in mind.

I also invite you to join our monthly networking meetings where people just like you come together to learn, grow, and be a resource to one another to address suicide prevention across the state of Georgia.

It's simple and free to join. Go to www.v4pga.org and click on Become a Member. Complete the form and just like that, you're in!



WE NEED YOUR VOICE



Our mission is to build a unified, statewide voice for substance abuse prevention and suicide prevention by collaborating with a diverse group of individuals and organizations with an interest in and a commitment to substance abuse prevention and suicide prevention.

Letting your voice be heard in substance abuse and suicide prevention in Georgia is crucial for creating a supportive and informed community. By speaking out, you can help break the stigma surrounding these issues, encourage others to seek help, and advocate for necessary resources and policies.

Voices for Prevention is funded by the Georgia Department of Behavioral Health & Development Disabilities (DBHDD) Office of Behavioral Health Prevention and Federal Grants (OBHPFG) in collaboration with The Council on Alcohol and Drugs.



HISTORY OF SUICIDE PREVENTION MONTH

World Suicide Prevention Day, observed annually on September 10th, was established in 2003 by the International Association for Suicide Prevention (IASP) in collaboration with the World Health Organization (WHO). This day serves as a global platform to raise awareness about suicide, promote preventive measures, and remember those who have been lost to suicide. Over the years, it has evolved into a critical day of action, encouraging individuals and organizations worldwide to come together in support of mental health and suicide prevention.

While Suicide Prevention Day is on September 10th, V4P celebrates Suicide Prevention Month the entire month of September. This month was developed as an extension of the efforts highlighted on World Suicide Prevention Day. This month-long observance provides a more sustained focus on suicide prevention, allowing for a deeper exploration of the issues surrounding suicide, mental health, and well-being.

Over the years, Georgia has strengthened its commitment to suicide prevention through coordinated efforts between government agencies, non-profit organizations, and local communities. Initiatives such as the implementation of the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline and the establishment of various support programs by DBHDD, like Voices for Prevention (V4P), underscore the state's proactive approach. Suicide Prevention Month in Georgia is marked by a series of events, educational campaigns, and community engagements designed to foster awareness, reduce stigma, and encourage open conversations about mental health. This month not only honors those lost to suicide but also rallies Georgians to join the fight in changing the narrative around suicide, ensuring that every resident knows they are not alone and that help is available.



CHANGING THE NARRATIVE

Changing the narrative around suicide is not just a matter of altering the way we talk about mental health—it is about transforming our collective understanding, attitudes, and actions to prevent loss of life. Suicide is a complex and multifaceted issue that affects individuals, families, and communities, often leaving a trail of grief and unanswered questions. By shifting the narrative from stigma and silence to one of compassion, support, and proactive intervention, we can create an environment where individuals feel safe to seek help, and where the community is equipped to provide that help.

In Georgia, the urgency to change this narrative is underscored by state data from recent years. Between 2020 and 2024, suicide rates in Georgia have remained a significant public health concern, with particular increases seen among young adults and veterans. According to data from the Georgia Department of Public Health, the state saw an average of over 1,600 suicides annually during this period. These statistics reflect not just numbers but the real lives and communities impacted by each tragedy. The rise in suicide rates highlights the need for a community-wide effort to address the underlying factors contributing to this crisis, such as mental health stigma, lack of access to care, and the need for better support systems.



CHANGING THE NARRATIVE (CONT.)

Changing the narrative means redefining how we perceive and discuss suicide. Historically, discussions around suicide have been shrouded in shame and fear, preventing many from seeking the help they need. By fostering open, honest, and non-judgmental conversations, we can begin to dismantle the stigma that often surrounds mental health issues. Education plays a crucial role in this process—equipping individuals with the knowledge to recognize warning signs, understand risk factors, and know how to respond can save lives. In Georgia, community-based initiatives, such as the expansion of the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline, have been pivotal in providing immediate support to those in crisis and exemplify the importance of accessible resources.

As a community, changing the narrative around suicide is a responsibility we all share. It requires a collective commitment to empathy, education, and action. By challenging misconceptions, supporting those in need, and advocating for comprehensive mental health care, we can work towards a future where suicide is not seen as an inevitable outcome but as a preventable tragedy. In Georgia, where the impact of suicide has been deeply felt, changing the narrative is not just an option—it is a necessity. Together, we can create a culture of understanding and support that not only reduces the incidence of suicide but also fosters a healthier, more connected community.



WHAT ACTIONS CAN I TAKE?

Educate Yourself and Others

- Attend suicide prevention workshops, webinars, or training sessions such as the ones V4P hosts annually or QPR (Question, Persuade, Refer).
- Share resources and information on suicide prevention with friends, family, and your community.

Be There for Someone in Need

- Be a listening ear and offer encouragement for those who may be struggling.
- Stay connected with loved ones and check in regularly, especially with those who may be vulnerable.

Promote Awareness

- Use social media platforms to spread awareness about suicide prevention and mental health resources.
- Participate in local events such as walks, fundraisers, or even V4P awareness campaigns during Suicide Prevention Month.



WHAT ACTIONS CAN I TAKE? (CONT.)

Volunteer

- Get involved with local organizations like V4P, NAMI Georgia, crisis hotlines, or community mental health centers. Volunteering can range from providing peer support to helping organize events

Advocate for Mental Health

- Advocate for better mental health services and policies in your community by contacting local representatives, supporting mental health legislation, or joining advocacy groups.

Support Local Initiatives

- Donate your time or funds to support local mental health and suicide prevention organizations. Your contribution can help fund essential programs and services.



WHAT ACTIONS CAN I TAKE? (CONT.)

Volunteer

- Get involved with local organizations like V4P, NAMI Georgia, crisis hotlines, or community mental health centers. Volunteering can range from providing peer support to helping organize events

Advocate for Mental Health

- Advocate for better mental health services and policies in your community by contacting local representatives, supporting mental health legislation, or joining advocacy groups.

Support Local Initiatives

- Donate your time or funds to support local mental health and suicide prevention organizations. Your contribution can help fund essential programs and services.



WHAT ACTIONS CAN I TAKE? (CONT.)

Be Mindful

- Suicide is a complex topic and words matter. So be sure to research and educate yourself on ways to approach this topic with care.
- When speaking about suicide consider some of these word replacements.

Instead of this...	...Say this	Why
Commit, Committed Suicide	Died by suicide, Death by suicide, Lost their life to suicide	“Commit” implies suicide is a sin or crime, reinforcing the stigma that it’s a selfish act and personal choice. Using neutral phrasing like “died by suicide” helps strip away the shame/blame element.
Epidemic, Skyrocketing	Rising, Increasing	Words like “epidemic” can spark panic, making suicide seem inevitable or more common than it actually is. By using purely quantitative, less emotionally charged terms like “rising”, we can avoid instilling a sense of doom or hopelessness.
Failed suicide or successful suicide	Suicide attempt	Suicide is not something to accomplish or fail
Suffering from	Diagnosed with	The word suffering can paint someone as a victim.
Mental institution	Treatment facility	Mental institution references outdated treatments of those with mental health issues.

COMMUNITY-BASED STRATEGIES

1. Know the Warning Signs of Suicide

Recognizing the warning signs of suicide is crucial for early intervention. These signs can be verbal, behavioral, or situational. Verbal cues include talking about wanting to die, feeling hopeless, or being a burden to others. Behavioral signs might involve withdrawing from social activities, giving away prized possessions, or drastic changes in mood and behavior. Situational factors, such as experiencing a significant loss or facing overwhelming stress, can also be indicators. By being aware of these signs, friends, family, and professionals can offer timely support and potentially save lives.

- Educational Workshops: Host workshops to educate the community about the warning signs of suicide and how to respond.
- Awareness Campaigns: Launch campaigns using social media, posters, and local media to spread awareness about the signs of suicide.
- Training Programs: Offer training for teachers, parents, and community leaders on recognizing and responding to warning signs.

2. Decrease Risk Factors

Understanding the risk factors for suicide helps identify individuals who may be more vulnerable. These factors include mental health disorders like depression and anxiety, substance abuse, a history of trauma or abuse, and major life changes such as divorce or job loss. Additionally, chronic physical illnesses and a family history of suicide can increase risk. Recognizing these factors allows for targeted interventions and support, reducing the likelihood of suicidal behavior.

- Mental Health Screenings: Organize free mental health screening events to identify individuals at risk.
- Support Groups: Create support groups for those dealing with risk factors like substance abuse or trauma.
- Resource Distribution: Distribute informational materials about risk factors and available resources for help.



COMMUNITY-BASED STRATEGIES

3. Increase Protective Factors

Protective factors are elements that reduce the risk of suicide and promote resilience. Strong personal relationships, access to mental health care, and effective problem-solving skills are key protective factors. A sense of purpose, involvement in community activities, and cultural or religious beliefs that discourage suicide can also provide a buffer against suicidal thoughts. By fostering these protective factors, individuals and communities can create a supportive environment that promotes mental well-being.

- **Community Building Events:** Host events that foster community connections, such as potlucks, sports leagues, or cultural festivals.
- **Skill-Building Workshops:** Offer workshops on problem-solving, stress management, and resilience-building.
- **Mentorship Programs:** Establish mentorship programs to connect individuals with positive role models.

4. Mental Health Support

Access to mental health support is vital for individuals struggling with suicidal thoughts. This includes therapy, medication, and support groups. Mental health professionals can provide coping strategies, emotional support, and treatment for underlying conditions. Early intervention and continuous care are essential in managing mental health issues and preventing suicide. Encouraging open conversations about mental health and reducing stigma can help more people seek the help they need.

- **Mental Health Fairs:** Organize fairs to provide information about mental health services and resources.
- **Counseling Services:** Partner with local mental health professionals to offer free or low-cost counseling sessions.
- **Hotline Promotion:** Promote crisis hotlines and mental health resources through community channels.



COMMUNITY-BASED STRATEGIES

5. Crisis Intervention

Crisis intervention involves immediate actions to support someone in acute distress. This can include contacting crisis hotlines, emergency services, or crisis intervention teams. These resources provide immediate support, safety planning, and connection to ongoing care. Training in crisis intervention techniques, such as active listening and de-escalation, can equip individuals to respond effectively in emergencies. Quick and compassionate intervention can prevent a crisis from escalating to a suicide attempt.

- **Crisis Response Training:** Train community members in crisis intervention techniques, such as active listening and de-escalation.
- **Emergency Contact Lists:** Create and distribute lists of local crisis intervention resources and emergency contacts.
- **Safe Spaces:** Establish safe spaces where individuals in crisis can go for immediate support.

6. Community and Social Support

Building strong community and social support networks is essential for suicide prevention. Social connections provide emotional support, reduce feelings of isolation, and offer practical assistance during difficult times. Community programs, peer support groups, and social activities can foster a sense of belonging and purpose. By creating inclusive and supportive communities, we can help individuals feel valued and connected, reducing the risk of suicide.

- **Peer Support Networks:** Develop peer support networks where individuals can connect and support each other.
- **Community Centers:** Create or enhance community centers that offer social activities and support services.
- **Volunteer Programs:** Encourage community members to volunteer and support local mental health initiatives.



COMMUNITY-BASED STRATEGIES

7. Public Awareness and Education

Increasing public awareness and education about suicide prevention can reduce stigma and encourage help-seeking behavior. Educational campaigns can inform people about the warning signs, risk factors, and available resources. Schools, workplaces, and community organizations can play a role in spreading awareness and providing training on how to support someone in crisis. By normalizing conversations about mental health, we can create a more supportive environment for those in need.

- **Public Seminars:** Host public seminars on suicide prevention and mental health awareness.
- **School Programs:** Implement suicide prevention education programs in schools.
- **Media Partnerships:** Partner with local media to run stories and segments on suicide prevention.

8. Media Reporting Guidelines

Responsible media reporting on suicide is crucial to prevent copycat suicides and provide helpful resources. Guidelines recommend avoiding sensationalism, providing information on warning signs and resources, and respecting the privacy of those affected. Media can play a positive role by highlighting stories of recovery and resilience, promoting mental health resources, and encouraging open discussions about suicide prevention. Adhering to these guidelines can help create a more informed and supportive public.

- **Media Training:** Provide training for local journalists on responsible reporting of suicide.
- **Guideline Distribution:** Distribute media reporting guidelines to local news outlets.
- **Positive Stories:** Encourage media to highlight stories of recovery and resilience.



COMMUNITY-BASED STRATEGIES

9. Research and Data Collection

Ongoing research and data collection are essential for understanding suicide trends, risk factors, and effective prevention strategies. Research helps identify at-risk populations, evaluate the effectiveness of interventions, and inform policy decisions. Data collection can include surveys, clinical studies, and analysis of suicide rates and patterns. By investing in research, we can develop evidence-based approaches to reduce suicide rates and improve mental health outcomes.

- **Community Surveys:** Conduct surveys to gather data on local mental health needs and trends.
- **Research Partnerships:** Partner with universities or research institutions to study suicide prevention in the community.
- **Data Sharing:** Share findings with local policymakers and organizations to inform prevention strategies.

10. Policy and Advocacy

Advocating for policies that support mental health funding, access to care, and suicide prevention programs can create systemic changes that benefit society. Policies can include funding for mental health services, training for healthcare providers, and initiatives to reduce stigma. Advocacy efforts can involve lobbying, public campaigns, and collaboration with policymakers. By promoting supportive policies, we can create an environment where mental health is prioritized, and individuals receive the care they need.

- **Advocacy Campaigns:** Organize campaigns to advocate for mental health funding and supportive policies.
- **Policy Workshops:** Host workshops to educate the community about the importance of mental health policies.
- **Legislative Meetings:** Arrange meetings with local legislators to discuss and promote mental health initiatives.

These activities can help create a supportive and informed community, ultimately contributing to the prevention of suicide. If you need more detailed information or assistance with any specific activity, feel free to ask!

When you become a V4P member, you have access to experts who can support you in developing these plans more fully in your community. Membership has its privileges.



COMMON MYTHS ABOUT SUICIDE

There are several common myths about suicide prevention that can hinder effective support and intervention. Here are some of the most prevalent myths and the facts that debunk them:

Myth 1: Talking about suicide will give someone the idea to do it.

Fact: Talking about suicide does not plant the idea in someone's mind. In fact, discussing it openly can reduce the risk by providing an opportunity for the person to express their feelings and seek help.

Myth 2: People who talk about suicide are just seeking attention.

Fact: Any talk of suicide should be taken seriously. It is often a cry for help and an indication that the person is experiencing significant distress.

Myth 3: Suicide happens without warning.

Fact: Most people who attempt suicide give some warning signs, such as talking about wanting to die, withdrawing from others, or showing drastic changes in behavior.

Myth 4: Once someone decides suicide as an option, nothing can stop them.

Fact: Suicidal thoughts can be fleeting. Interventions, support, and treatment can help individuals find reasons to live and manage their distress.

Myth 5: Only experts can help prevent suicide.

Fact: While professional help is crucial, friends, family, and community members can also play a significant role in preventing suicide by offering support and connecting individuals to resources.



COMMON MYTHS ABOUT SUICIDE

Myth 6: People who are suicidal are always depressed.

Fact: While depression is a common risk factor, not everyone who is suicidal is depressed. Other factors, such as anxiety, substance abuse, and situational crises, can also contribute.

Myth 7: Suicidal behavior is inherited.

Fact: While a family history of suicide can increase risk, it is not a direct cause. Environmental, psychological, and social factors also play significant roles.

Myth 8: Suicide is more common during the holidays.

Fact: Contrary to popular belief, suicide rates are not highest during the holidays. They tend to peak in the spring and early summer.

Myth 9: Once a person feels better, the risk of suicide is over.

Fact: Even if someone seems to be feeling better, they may still be at risk. Continuous support and monitoring are important, especially after a crisis³.

Myth 10: Suicide is always impulsive.

Fact: While some suicides are impulsive, many are the result of a long-term struggle with mental health issues. Recognizing and addressing these issues early can prevent suicide¹.

Understanding these myths and the facts behind them can help create a more supportive environment for those at risk and encourage effective prevention efforts. If you or someone you know is struggling, don't hesitate to reach out for help.



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

1. Georgia Crisis & Access Line (GCAL):

- Description: A 24/7 toll-free hotline providing immediate assistance for mental health, substance abuse, and crisis situations.
- Phone: 1-800-715-4225
- Website: [Georgia Crisis & Access Line](#)

2. 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline:

- Description: A nationwide 24/7 lifeline that connects callers with trained counselors for support in a crisis.
- Phone: 988
- Website: [988lifeline.org](#)

3. Georgia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities (DBHDD):

- Description: Provides a range of services for mental health, substance abuse, and crisis intervention across the state.
- Website: [dbhdd.georgia.gov](#)

4. National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) Georgia:

- Description: Offers support, education, and advocacy for individuals and families affected by mental illness.
- Website: [namiga.org](#)
- Local Chapters: NAMI has local chapters throughout Georgia, providing peer support groups, educational programs, and community outreach.



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

1. The Link Counseling Center (Atlanta)

- Description: A nonprofit community counseling center offering suicide prevention programs, grief support, and crisis intervention services.
- Website: thelink.org

2. Chris180 (Atlanta)

- Description: Provides counseling, mental health services, and crisis intervention for children, adolescents, and families.
- Website: chris180.org

3. Georgia Suicide Prevention Coalition:

- Description: A statewide coalition that works to coordinate suicide prevention efforts, offering resources, training, and support for communities.
- Website: georgiasuicideprevention.org

4. QPR Training

- QPR is an evidence-based suicide prevention curriculum that teaches individuals to recognize someone at risk, intervene with confidence and competence.
- soarga.org
- sppga.org



UPCOMING EVENTS

Substance Use Prevention Day



Save the Date

Visit v4pGA.org

Georgia Freight Depot
February 27, 2025



Suicide Prevention Day



Save the Date

Visit v4pGA.org

Sloppy Floyd Building
March 20, 2025



● 2024 SUICIDE PREVENTION
MONTH TOOLKIT

LET'S STAY CONNECTED

Become a member to gain exclusive information about the latest webinars, networking events, newsletters, and advocacy calls.

Visit our website to join. It's free!



v4pga.org



v4pga



Voices for Prevention-
Georgia



@voicesforprevention

