

Why we exist

Most residents of Delaware County are unaware that at least 45 to 60 confirmed suicides occur every year in this county. No one is immune to suicide. It occurs across all race, gender, economic, social, ethnic, and age boundaries, and it almost always comes as a shock to bereaved loved ones and to the community.

In 2002, a group of county residents who had lost someone close to suicide decided that more should be done to spare others this tragedy. They founded the Delaware County Suicide Prevention & Awareness Task Force and asked others in the county to join them in their effort to tell the community the truth about suicide and suicide loss and to eliminate the stigma associated with suicide. The Task Force continues to carry out this effort by providing education, resources and support.

DCSPATF exists to

- Dispel myths and stigma that create barriers that keep people from seeking help and further complicate the grieving process of those experiencing a suicide loss
- Disseminate accurate information about the trends and reasons why suicide occurs and raise awareness that this is a preventable community-wide problem
- Educate the community about suicide prevention and postvention using evidence-based programs
- Ensure appropriate support is available and accessible in a timely manner following a suicide

Survivors of a suicide loss not only experience grief that ordinarily accompanies death, but often struggle with stigma, guilt and shame.

As 90% of individuals who complete suicide have a diagnosable mental illness, accessible mental health services is an important preventative measure.

What we do

ANNUAL EVENTS

- The **Walk/Run** in May
- The **Candlelight Memorial** in September is co-sponsored with the Survivors of Suicide, Inc.
- A **General Membership** meeting held in January

TRAINING AND WORKSHOPS

- An **active speakers bureau** is available
- A **regional conference** held in November is for professionals to learn more about suicide through the delivery of current information on topics relevant and applicable to their work.

DCSPATF WEBSITE

Check out the **Delaware County Resource Guide**

- All upcoming meetings, events and conferences are posted with links to registration forms
- Find information, research and fact sheets
- **Articles, links and legislative updates** on mental health and suicide prevention topics are also available on this web site

OUTREACH

- The Task Force serves as a point of contact following a suicide to connect bereaved family members and/or groups in the community with individuals who are qualified and able to provide helpful information and needed support

Suicidal behaviors are a complex interaction of:

Risk factors which may include genetic make-up, physical or psychiatric illness, lifestyle, past history of abuse, or prior suicide attempt

Triggers which are stressful events that happen to or around an individual resulting in a significant loss, low self-esteem, or feelings of failure

Warning signs either in the form of behaviors or things a person says that indicate suicidal feelings

In the midst of a crisis a person may perceive their situation as inescapable. They feel overwhelmingly alone, helpless and hopeless. When contemplating suicide, individuals do not really want to die; they just want to end the pain.

For every completed suicide, 6 to 8 individuals are left seriously bereaved. Many more are affected by the short-term impact of the suicide.

"Society's view of suicide and suicidal behavior is evolving from seeing such behavior as an individual act directly affecting a single person, to a societal event in which the suicide is one of many facets of a community - a community that must then accept a leading role in preventing its occurrence."

National Strategy for Suicide Prevention: Goals and Objectives for Action

Community programs need to strengthen norms that support help-seeking behavior in all settings, including family, work, school, and community.

A variety of occupations, community groups and places such as prisons, workplace and emergency departments must be involved. Training of local health professionals and key community gatekeepers is critical to suicide prevention.

As social and culturally based values and practices in a community have an impact on the individual, community characteristics that contribute to risk factors can be addressed by the community .

An increased risk of suicide in a community has an impact on the local population's pattern of suicide, interpersonal violence, and depression.

The most effective form of suicide prevention takes place at the community level.

Sources and statistics cited: National Institute of Mental Health, National Center for Health Statistics, U.S. Centers for Disease Control, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, World Health Organization, Delaware County Coroners Office meh 10/2007

Why a community effort is needed

Who we are

We are people in the community who are concerned about the number of preventable suicides that occur in Delaware County, and we are committed to do something about it.

We are an active coalition of local businesses, healthcare and mental health providers, law enforcement, government agencies, community members and individuals who are dedicated to helping to prevent suicide, reduce the stigma associated with suicide, and provide support for people affected by depression or by the loss of a loved one to suicide. We do this through raising awareness, education, and outreach.

Since its inception in 2003 under the auspices of the Delaware County Medical Society, the Delaware County Suicide Prevention Awareness Task Force has continued to have a growing membership of more than 40 individuals.

Why talk about suicide

- ◆ More people die by suicide than homicide
- ◆ In the past 5 years, suicide has claimed more lives than AIDS
- ◆ It is the 11th leading cause of death in this country, the 3rd among teenagers, and the 2nd among college students
- ◆ Over 31,000 Americans complete suicide every year with an estimated 500,000 individuals making suicide attempts
- ◆ A 60% increase in completed suicides has occurred worldwide within the last 45 years
- ◆ 65% of completed suicides use a firearm
- ◆ 75% of suicides give some warning of their intentions to a friend or family member before they act

SUICIDE CAN BE PREVENTABLE
through awareness, education and training

You can help

- › Learn common risk factors and warning signs
- › Understand the effects of stigma and speak out against it
- › If someone talks about suicide, don't be afraid to get involved and trust your instincts - If you think a person needs it, help them get help
- › Give hope that recovery from mental illness is possible
- › If you have concerns, ask the person if they are feeling suicidal and if they have a plan. Silence can be deadly!
- › Keep local crisis #s handy or call 911
- › Help yourself by staying healthy; physically and mentally
- › Help strengthen protective factors and add new ones
- › If you experience signs of depression, get help right away
- › Get involved in suicide prevention in your community

**NOW LET'S TALK ABOUT IT! With our
friends, family, neighbors, colleagues ...**

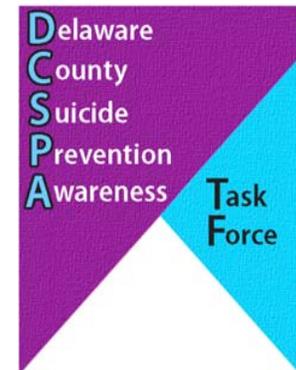
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SUICIDE PREVENTION IS EVERYBODY'S BUSINESS

DELAWARE COUNTY SUICIDE PREVENTION & AWARENESS TASK FORCE

Suicide is a community-
wide, preventable
health problem

LET'S TALK ABOUT IT !



For more information visit:
www.delcosuicideprevention.org