

Normalizing Conversations About Mental Health and Suicide Toolkit

RECOMMENDATIONS AND RESOURCES FOR ACTION

This toolkit was developed in collaboration with the [Minnesota Suicide Prevention Taskforce](https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/suicide/mnresponse/taskforce.html) (<https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/suicide/mnresponse/taskforce.html>). The goal is to provide Minnesotans with recommendations for action, tools, and resources that can be used by organizations, communities, and individuals to normalize conversations about mental health, prevent Minnesotans from having suicidal experiences, and improve the lives of people who are struggling, so they know they are not alone, help is available, and healing is possible.

Talking about mental health can help.

We all have mental health, and it's as essential to a person's life as physical health. [Mental health](https://www.samhsa.gov/mental-health) (<https://www.samhsa.gov/mental-health>) includes our emotional, psychological, and social well-being. It affects how we think, feel, and act, and helps determine how we handle stress, relate to others, and make choices. However, many times individuals, families, organizations, and communities hesitate to talk about it. By not talking about mental health, it can increase the risk of individuals that are struggling and potentially decrease the likelihood that an individual will seek help when they need it the most. By normalizing conversations on mental health within communities, the hope is that it will:

- Create awareness and understanding that everyone has mental health.
- Improve perceptions and decrease stereotypes around mental health.
- Empower people to talk openly about their mental health struggles.
- Increase social connection and build support networks for people.
- Shift the conversation on mental health to focus on strengths, hope, and resilience.
- Spread awareness of what types of support are available within one's community.
- Increase the likelihood that people will seek support when they need it.
- Validate peoples' experiences, and let them know they are not alone, help is available, and healing is possible.

What you can do

Often our first points of contact when we are struggling are our friends, family, or colleagues. To better support the people we care about, we've identified the following things you can do to learn about mental wellness, feel more comfortable talking about mental health, and use helpful resources that are available. It is also important to remember to take care of ourselves, know when to get help, and share our own stories about mental health when possible.

Learn more about mental health and well-being.

- [Creating a Healthier Life: A Step-by-Step Guide to Wellness \(store.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/d7/priv/sma16-4958.pdf\)](https://store.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/d7/priv/sma16-4958.pdf): The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) holistic wellness model with the eight dimensions of wellness.
- [MDH Mental Health Promotion \(health.state.mn.us/communities/mentalhealth/index.html\)](https://health.state.mn.us/communities/mentalhealth/index.html): Public health core values and beliefs about and descriptions of mental health and well-being.

Learn how to talk about mental health and suicide and identify and support individuals who are struggling or having suicidal experiences.

- [Suicide Prevention Training \(https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/suicide/communities/preventsuicidetrainings.html\)](https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/suicide/communities/preventsuicidetrainings.html): Suicide prevention trainings for community groups and delivered by certified trainers. [National Alliance on Mental Illness Minnesota All Currently Scheduled Classes \(https://namimn.org/education-and-public-awareness/classes/https-namimn-org-education-and-public-awareness-classes-all-scheduled-classes/#qpr\)](https://namimn.org/education-and-public-awareness/classes/https-namimn-org-education-and-public-awareness-classes-all-scheduled-classes/#qpr): NAMI Minnesota in-person and online classes.
- [Seize the Awkward \(seizetheawkward.org/#starting-the-conversation\)](https://seizetheawkward.org/#starting-the-conversation): Resource with signs that a friend is struggling, conversation starters, tips for support, and where to get help.
- [Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration \(https://www.samhsa.gov/mental-health/how-to-talk/friends-and-family-members\)](https://www.samhsa.gov/mental-health/how-to-talk/friends-and-family-members): Resources to support friend or family member with mental health problems.

Be conscious of language when talking about mental health and suicide.

- [Safe Messaging around Mental Health and Suicide \(health.state.mn.us/communities/suicide/documents/safemessaging.pdf\)](https://health.state.mn.us/communities/suicide/documents/safemessaging.pdf): Guide for safe messaging about suicide.

Learn about and promote resources available in Minnesota.

- [211 United Way \(211unitedway.org\)](https://211unitedway.org): Easy-to-remember number Minnesotans can call to get free and confidential health and human services information.
- [988 Minnesota Lifeline \(988lifeline.org\)](https://988lifeline.org): Provides 24/7, free, confidential support for people in distress, prevention and crisis resources for you or your loved ones, and best practices for professionals.
- [State Mobile Crisis Services \(mn.gov/dhs/people-we-serve/people-with-disabilities/health-care/childrens-mental-health/resources/crisis-contacts.jsp\)](https://mn.gov/dhs/people-we-serve/people-with-disabilities/health-care/childrens-mental-health/resources/crisis-contacts.jsp): Crisis numbers in each county answered 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

What organizations can do

Organizations can protect the health and well-being of people by having policies, procedures, and programming in place to promote mental health and prevent suicidal experiences. It is important that leadership is a credible messenger that supports this work. The following actions and resources are available for workplaces and can be tailored to any type of organization.

Create and promote a safe space so that people feel comfortable talk about mental health, have a sense of belonging, and connection.

- [Workplace Mental Health & Well-Being — Current Priorities of the U.S. Surgeon General \(hhs.gov/surgeongeneral/priorities/workplace-well-being/index.html\)](https://hhs.gov/surgeongeneral/priorities/workplace-well-being/index.html): Offers a foundation that workplaces can build upon.

Build capacity by offering classes around wellness, mental health, and suicide.

- [Suicide Prevention Training \(https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/suicide/communities/preventsuicidetrainings.html\)](https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/suicide/communities/preventsuicidetrainings.html): Suicide prevention trainings delivered by certified trainers through the Minnesota Department of Health.

Engage others in conversations and plan activities to promote the importance of emotional well-being and connection.

- [#StayConnectedMN \(https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/suicide/communities/stayconnectedmn.html\)](https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/suicide/communities/stayconnectedmn.html): Resources developed by the Minnesota Department of Health
- [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Preventing Suicide Through Connectedness \(cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/asap_suicide_issue3-a.pdf\)](https://cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/asap_suicide_issue3-a.pdf): Enhanced Evaluation and Actionable Knowledge for Suicide Prevention Series.
- [Workplace Mental Health Toolkit \(mhanational.org/workplace/toolkit\)](https://mhanational.org/workplace/toolkit): A resource developed by Mental Health America to support mental health in the workplace.
- [Mental Well-Being and Resilience Learning Community \(https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/mentalhealth/community.html\)](https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/mentalhealth/community.html) and [Minnesota Thrive \(https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/mentalhealth/mnthrives.html\)](https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/mentalhealth/mnthrives.html): Communities from across the state share what they are doing for mental health and well-being. These resources are facilitated by the Minnesota Department of Health.

Promote hope, help, and resilience by using collective messaging from these partners.

- [MDH Suicide Prevention Materials and Resources \(health.state.mn.us/communities/suicide/basics/materials.html\)](https://health.state.mn.us/communities/suicide/basics/materials.html): Toolkits, messaging guides, and more to promote mental health and suicide prevention.
- [MDH Mental Health Promotion Materials \(health.state.mn.us/communities/mentalhealth/tools.html\)](https://health.state.mn.us/communities/mentalhealth/tools.html): Community tools, facts sheets, and infographics on the mental health promotion.
- [You Matter- Mental Health and Suicide Crisis Messaging \(health.state.mn.us/communities/suicide/communities/youmatter.html\)](https://health.state.mn.us/communities/suicide/communities/youmatter.html): Mental health and suicide crisis messaging from the Minnesota Department of Health Suicide Prevention Unit.

Identify and develop a process to support individuals that may be struggling with their mental health or having suicidal experiences.

- [Workplace Suicide Prevention \(workplacesuicideprevention.com\)](https://workplacesuicideprevention.com): A call to action to all workplaces and professional associations to implement the National Guidelines for Workplace Suicide Prevention.
- [Comprehensive Blueprint for Workplace Suicide Prevention \(theactionalliance.org/communities/workplace/blueprintforworkplacesuicideprevention\)](https://theactionalliance.org/communities/workplace/blueprintforworkplacesuicideprevention): Resources developed by the National Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention.

Learn about and promote resources available in your community and Minnesota.

- [211 United Way \(211unitedway.org\)](https://211unitedway.org): Easy-to-remember number Minnesotans can call to get free and confidential health and human services information.
- [988 Minnesota Lifeline \(988lifeline.org\)](https://988lifeline.org): Provides 24/7, free, confidential support for people in distress, prevention and crisis resources for you or your loved ones, and best practices for professionals.
- [State Mobile Crisis Services \(mn.gov/dhs/people-we-serve/people-with-disabilities/health-care/childrens-mental-health/resources/crisis-contacts.jsp\)](https://mn.gov/dhs/people-we-serve/people-with-disabilities/health-care/childrens-mental-health/resources/crisis-contacts.jsp): Crisis numbers in each county answered 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

What communities can do

The most effective way to normalize conversations around mental health is to develop a comprehensive community approach with multiple sectors in the community working together while independently looking at their own policies and procedures. Community sectors could include local and Tribal government, education, social services, health and behavioral health care services, business, labor, justice, housing, media, and organizations such as faith-based organizations, youth serving organizations, foundations, and other nonprofit organizations. Below are some recommendations to support doing this work together and a community approach to these important conversations.

Convene a group of people within the community to develop and sustain a coalition to address mental health and suicide.

- [How can leadership normalize the conversation around mental health?](https://www.mhanational.org/how-can-leadership-normalize-conversation-around-mental-health) (<https://www.mhanational.org/how-can-leadership-normalize-conversation-around-mental-health>): Resource from Mental Health America.
- [Community Toolbox \(ctb.ku.edu/en\)](http://ctb.ku.edu/en): Online resource for those working to build healthier communities and bring about social change.

Organize and offer trainings on mental health and well-being, talking about mental health and suicide, and supporting someone struggling with mental health.

- [Suicide prevention training opportunities through the Minnesota Department of Health \(health.state.mn.us/communities/suicide/communities/preventsuicidetrainings.html\)](http://health.state.mn.us/communities/suicide/communities/preventsuicidetrainings.html): Host a Changing the Narrative on Mental Health and Suicide or other mental health and suicide prevention training.
- [Mental Health Promotion \(health.state.mn.us/communities/mentalhealth/index.html\)](http://health.state.mn.us/communities/mentalhealth/index.html): Information and resources on mental health promotion and well-being from the Minnesota Department of Health.
- [Creating a Healthier Life: A Step-by-Step Guide to Wellness \(store.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/d7/priv/sma16-4958.pdf\)](http://store.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/d7/priv/sma16-4958.pdf): The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) holistic wellness model with the eight dimensions of wellness.

Promote messages of hope, help, and resilience by utilizing collective messaging developed by these partners.

- [MDH Suicide Prevention Materials and Resources \(health.state.mn.us/communities/suicide/basics/materials.html\)](http://health.state.mn.us/communities/suicide/basics/materials.html): Toolkits, messaging guides, and more to promote mental health and suicide prevention.

- [MDH Mental Health Promotion Materials \(health.state.mn.us/communities/mentalhealth/tools.html\)](https://health.state.mn.us/communities/mentalhealth/tools.html): Community tools, facts sheets, and infographics on the mental health promotion.
- [You Matter- Mental Health and Suicide Crisis Messaging \(health.state.mn.us/communities/suicide/communities/youmatter.html\)](https://health.state.mn.us/communities/suicide/communities/youmatter.html): Mental health and suicide crisis messaging from the Minnesota Department of Health Suicide Prevention Unit.

Learn more about what communities are doing around the state to promote mental health.

- [Mental Health and Well-being \(health.state.mn.us/people/mentalhealth.html\)](https://health.state.mn.us/people/mentalhealth.html): Information and resources to support mental health and well-being.
- [Mental Well-Being and Resilience Learning Community \(https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/mentalhealth/community.html\)](https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/mentalhealth/community.html) and [Minnesota Thrive \(https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/mentalhealth/mnthrives.html\)](https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/mentalhealth/mnthrives.html): Communities from across the state sharing what they are doing for Mental Health and Well-being. These resources are facilitated by the Minnesota Department of Health.

Engage people in conversations and incorporate mental health into activities to promote the importance of emotional well-being and connection.

- [#StayConnectedMN \(https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/suicide/communities/stayconnectedmn.html\)](https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/suicide/communities/stayconnectedmn.html): Resources developed by the Minnesota Department of Health.
- [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Preventing Suicide Through Connectedness \(cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/asap_suicide_issue3-a.pdf\)](https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/asap_suicide_issue3-a.pdf): Enhanced Evaluation and Actionable Knowledge for Suicide Prevention Series.
- [Workplace Mental Health Toolkit \(mhanational.org/workplace/toolkit\)](https://mhanational.org/workplace/toolkit): A resource developed by Mental Health America to support mental health in the workplace.

Promote connectedness in neighborhoods, communities, and among cultural groups.

- [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Preventing Suicide Through Connectedness \(cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/asap_suicide_issue3-a.pdf\)](https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/asap_suicide_issue3-a.pdf): Resources on Preventing Suicide through Connectedness.

- [#StayConnectedMN](https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/suicide/communities/stayconnectedmn.html) (<https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/suicide/communities/stayconnectedmn.html>): Mental health messaging toolkit developed with themes of connection.

Learn about and promote resources available in your community and Minnesota.

- Complete a landscape analysis of local resources available to support individuals with their mental and physical well-being.
- [211 United Way \(211unitedway.org\)](https://www.211.org/): Easy-to-remember number Minnesotans can call to get free and confidential health and human services information.
- [988 Minnesota Lifeline \(988lifeline.org\)](https://www.988lifeline.org/): Provides 24/7, free, confidential support for people in distress, prevention and crisis resources for you or your loved ones, and best practices for professionals.
- [State Mobile Crisis Services \(mn.gov/dhs/people-we-serve/people-with-disabilities/health-care/childrens-mental-health/resources/crisis-contacts.jsp\)](https://mn.gov/dhs/people-we-serve/people-with-disabilities/health-care/childrens-mental-health/resources/crisis-contacts.jsp): Crisis numbers in each county answered 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

We want to hear from you! Please submit feedback on the usefulness of this resource by filling out this survey: <https://survey.vovici.com/se/56206EE3706DA052>

Minnesota Department of Health Suicide Prevention Unit
85 East 7th Pl, PO Box 64882
St. Paul, MN 55164-0882
health.suicideprev.mdh@state.mn.us
www.health.state.mn.us

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