

It's National Suicide Prevention Month

Centennial Mental Health Center works to promote hope, help and strength through prevention services across the lifespan

By Maranda Miller

Centennial Mental Health Center
Journal Advocate

Posted:Wed Sep 12 21:29:25 MDT 2018

Suicidal thoughts, much like mental health conditions, can affect anyone regardless of age, gender or background. In fact, suicide is often the result of an untreated mental health condition. Suicidal thoughts, although common, should not be considered normal and often indicate more serious issues.

Last year, 1,175 Coloradans died by suicide and left behind their friends and family members to navigate the tragedy of loss. In many cases, friends and families affected by a suicide loss (often called "suicide loss survivors") are left in the dark. Too often the feelings of shame and stigma prevent them from talking openly.

September is National Suicide Prevention Awareness Month — a time to share resources and stories in an effort to shed light on this highly taboo and stigmatized topic. Although this is the nationally designated month, Centennial works every month to reach out to those affected by suicide, raise awareness and connect individuals with suicidal ideation to treatment services.

Suicide is rarely caused by a single factor and many times is caused by disconnection and isolation. It is essential that individuals with thoughts of suicide are asked about suicide and have access to help from professionals, friends and families. It is critical that everyone is educated about the multiple risk factors and where to access help.

Over the past several years and with increased grant funding, Centennial Mental Health Center has expanded prevention services in the 10-county region of Northeast Colorado. These services are provided across the lifespan, from school aged children to older adults. The majority of them are offered free of charge, due to braiding of funds from Northeast Colorado Health Department, The Colorado Office of Suicide Prevention and the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, among others.

Programs specifically targeting school aged youth focus on suicide and substance use prevention. "More than Sad: Teen Depression Program" helps youth learn to identify depression, which is the leading risk factor for suicide. It encourages them to seek help if they notice the signs of depression in themselves or a friend. An educator and parent version are also available with similar emphasis. "Sources of Strength" uses peer leaders, guided by adult advisors, within the schools to promote protective factors against suicide and other harmful behaviors. To combat substance use, "Botvin LifeSkills Training" is provided to students from fourth through 12th grade over a series of eight weeks.

College aged youth is also a priority population in the prevention field. Centennial provides "It's Real: College Students and Mental Health Program" to encourage help seeking behaviors as well as to serve as a reminder that mental health issues can be managed.

Robust varieties of programs are available to the communities of Northeast Colorado and can be provided onsite. "Mental Health First Aid" focuses on adult mental health issues. This training teaches individuals how to recognize someone experiencing the common signs of a mental health issue and how to respond to that person while accessing their need for help. There is also a "Youth Mental Health First Aid" applicable for adults who work with youth. "Question, Persuade and Refer Suicide Prevention Gatekeeper Training," or QPR, teaches the warning signs of suicide and how to ask the often uncomfortable suicide question: "are you thinking about killing yourself," "Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training," ASIST, is a workshop designed to help individuals become more prepared and able to intervene with a person at risk of suicide. "Working Minds; Suicide Prevention for the Workplace" is provided in the workplace to strengthen positive mental health among colleagues and to teach early identification and intervention of suicide.

Centennial's Prevention Team also offers bereavement materials to individuals who have lost a loved one to suicide.

To learn more about any of these programs or resource, please contact the Prevention Team at 970.522.4549 or prevention@centennialmhc.org.

If you or someone you know is in crisis or you're worried about someone's mental health or substance use call 844.493.TALK (8255) or text TALK to 38255 or call 970.522.4392.