Finding and Using Suicide Data
for Prevention Efforts

Why is it important?
Finding and using accurate and relevant data is critical to effective prevention. Data are important for:
- Understanding the scope and severity of a problem
- Identifying related risk and protective factors
- Evaluating your efforts

Suicide

A death resulting from an action taken by a person with the intent or reasonable expectation that action will result in their death. Data are obtained from death certificates.

National/State:
CDC WISQARS Fatal Injury Reports, Wyoming Suicide and Self-Harm Dashboard, Wyoming Vital Statistics*

County/Local:
Wyoming Suicide and Self-Harm Dashboard *data from above sources that may be available upon request

Suicide Attempts

An action taken by a person with the intent or reasonable expectation that the action will result in their death, but does not. The action may or may not result in an injury.

National/State: CDC WISQARS Nonfatal Injury Reports, Wyoming Suicide and Self-Harm Dashboard, Prevention Needs Assessment (PNA), Safe2Tell*, Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System (YRBSS)*

County/Local: Wyoming Suicide and Self-Harm Dashboard, PNA
*data from above sources that may be available upon request through your local school or school district

Suicidal Ideation

Suicidal thinking that can range from a vague wish to die to actively making a suicide plan and/or acquiring means to take one's own life.

National/State:
Prevention Needs Assessment (PNA), Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System (YRBSS)*, National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH)

County/Local: PNA
*data from above sources that may be available upon request through your local school or school district

Risk & Protective Factors

Risk factors are characteristics or situations that increase the probability of suicide, a suicide attempt, or suicidal ideation. Protective factors are those characteristics or situations that mitigate, or lessen, the risk.

National/State: Prevention Needs Assessment (PNA)*, Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System (YRBSS)*, National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH) , Behavioral Risk Factor Survey (BRFS)

County/Local:*data from above sources that may be available upon request through your local school or school district

For a detailed list of available data sources, descriptions, and where to access them in Wyoming; please visit our Wyoming Suicide Data Inventory on our website: health.wyo.gov/wivpp

Now that you have your data, what should you do?

Counts vs. Rates

A count is the total number of cases in a given group during a given time period, e.g., the number of suicides among Natrona County teens in 2016. A rate is a measure of the number of events per population, during a given time period, e.g., the number of suicides among Natrona County teens in 2016 compared to the total number of teens in Natrona in 2016. Using rates allows you to compare different communities. When you are comparing your community to another such as comparing your county to the state, it is important to use rates.

Trends

Whenever possible it is important to look at more than one point in time. Is the problem increasing, decreasing, or remaining the same? In order to look at a trend you need at least three data points over time. Since the number of people (population) changes over time, it is better to use rates, not counts, when looking at trends.

Need more local level data?

Local level data that is not systematically collected at a State level can be gathered to inform your prevention efforts directly from your community. Try some, or all of the following:

- Request reports from local businesses, schools, or healthcare facilities.

- Complete an environmental scan of current prevention efforts, policies, and/ or resources in your community.

- Conduct key informant interviews with community stakeholders.

- Conduct focus groups with at-risk populations.

Identifying risk and protective factors

It is important to remember that risk factors are not warning signs. Warning signs are found in an individual and indicate an immediate risk for suicide. Risk (and protective) factors are found in individuals *and* in their community. Looking at risk and protective factors helps identify things that might need to change within a community in order to decrease suicide over time. It is important to include information on risk and protective factors as they can help guide the prevention strategies you select and they allow you to monitor the progress of your efforts with more immediate outcomes. Some examples include:

- Substance use
- Access to lethal means
- Access to effective mental healthcare
- Connectedness to individuals, family, and community

Key takeaways for using suicide data in your prevention efforts:

- Use data from different outcomes including suicide, suicide attempts, suicidal ideation, and related risk and protective factors to get a complete picture of the problem in your community.
- Use rates instead of counts when comparing your community to others, or when looking at trends.
- Examine data by several characteristics to help guide your prevention efforts such as age, race, ethnicity, mechanism of injury, sexual orientation, etc.
- Use the data to inform decisions about which strategies to implement and to evaluate your efforts.
- Share the data you find with your partners, funders, stakeholders, and the community.

For more information, please visit our website at health.wyo.gov/wivpp

Wyoming Department of Health

Wyoming Injury & Violence Prevention Program

References:
1. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Data Sources | Suicide | Violence Prevention | Injury Center | CDC. https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/suicide/datasources.html.
2. Suicide Prevention Resource Center. Strategic Planning | Suicide Prevention Resource Center. https://www.sprc.org/effective-prevention/strategic-planning.
3. Prevention and Equity at the Center of Community Well-Being Connecting the Dots: An Overview of the Links Among Multiple Forms of Violence. https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/connecting_the_dots-a.pdf.