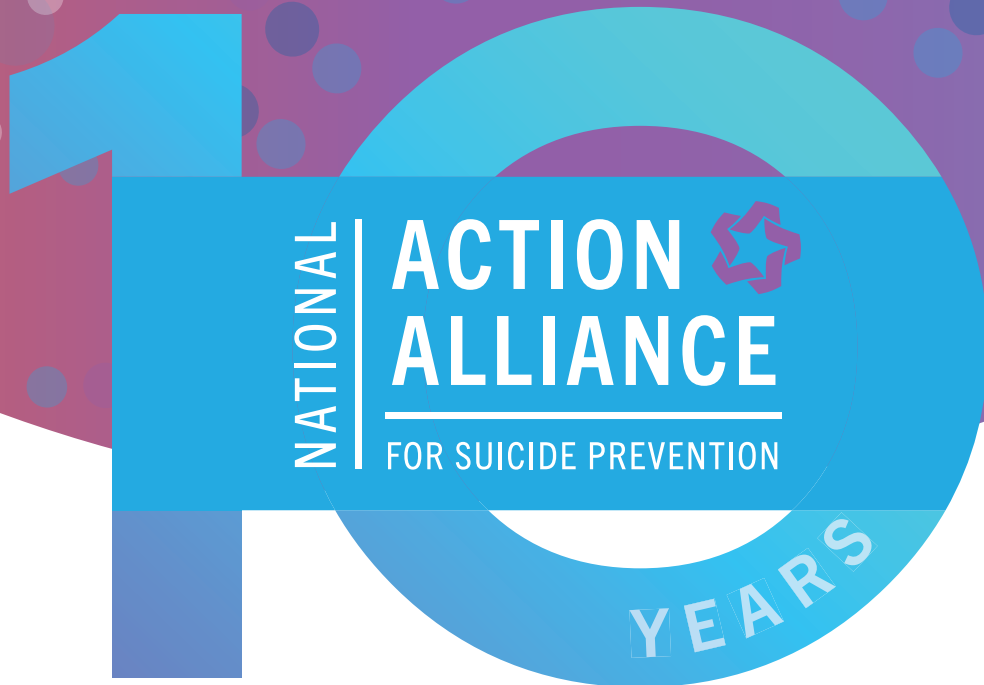


A DECADE OF PROGRESS AND PARTNERSHIPS

EMPOWERING CHANGE, DRIVING IMPACT



“

Today, we are better prepared than ever before to meet these challenges. We now know more about who is at greatest risk for suicide and what is working to help save lives.”



Robert W. Turner

Senior Vice President, Retired
Union Pacific Corporation



Carolyn M. Clancy, MD

Deputy Under Secretary for Health for
Discovery, Education, and Affiliate Networks
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

A MESSAGE FROM OUR CO-CHAIRS

Since the [National Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention](#) (Action Alliance) was founded in September 2010, protecting Americans from suicide has been the driving force behind everything we do. Guided by the knowledge that suicide is preventable, we have joined forces with diverse partners to achieve a common vision—*a nation free from the tragic experience of suicide.*

Working together, we have made significant progress in advancing the goals and objectives of the [National Strategy for Suicide Prevention](#) (*National Strategy*) by focusing our efforts on three targeted priority areas that hold the most promise for reducing suicide in the United States: [improving and strengthening suicide care](#), [enhancing community-based suicide prevention](#), and [changing the national conversation around suicide](#). Moreover, we have led progress in crosscutting areas, such as research and surveillance, reducing access to lethal means among individuals at risk, and engaging individuals with lived experience in suicide prevention.

As we celebrate our collective impact over the past 10 years, we must also acknowledge the great challenges we have faced—and continue to face—as a nation. The suicide rate has continued to increase. The COVID-19 pandemic is increasing emotional distress and financial instability among millions of Americans, particularly communities of color that already face significant structural barriers to health and economic well-being. These developments create a new sense of urgency to lead efforts that will buffer the effect of emerging risks and increase resiliency for all Americans.

Today, we are better prepared than ever before to meet these challenges. We now know more about who is at greatest risk for suicide and what is working to help save lives. Working closely with our partners in the public and private sectors, we have built a strong and unified foundation for national suicide prevention. The many accomplishments outlined in this report are a testament to the hard work and dedication of our [Executive Committee](#) (EXCOM), [task forces and advisory committees](#), and [Secretariat team](#). We extend our sincere appreciation to the many individuals and organizations that have contributed to these accomplishments. And yet there is more to do.

Advancing the *National Strategy* and reducing suicide in America requires focus, alignment, and commitment. Together, we will continue to lead the progress in implementing evidence-based approaches that will prevent suicide and save lives.

Sincerely,

Robert W. Turner and Carolyn M. Clancy, MD

ONE VISION, ONE VOICE

Leading the National Response to Suicide

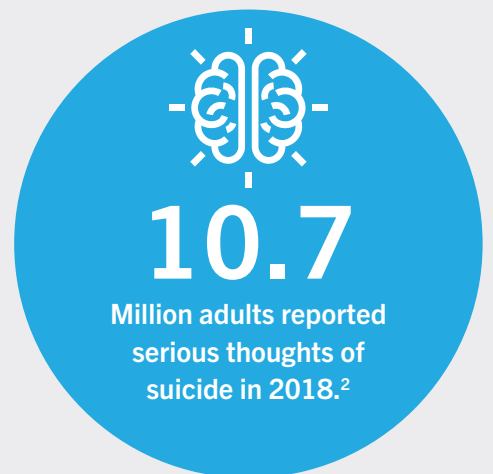
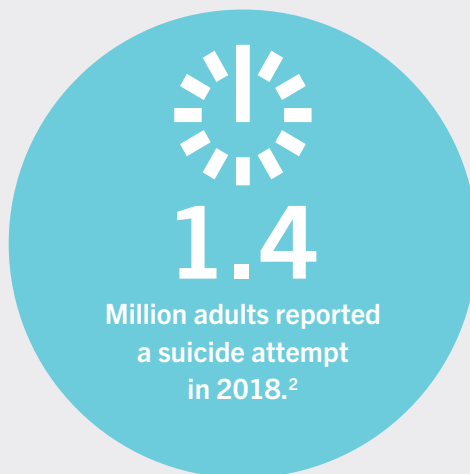
The Action Alliance, a public-private partnership, works with over 250 partners to lead a coordinated, comprehensive national response to suicide in the U.S.

Making Suicide Prevention a National Priority

The core strength of the Action Alliance is its ability to connect partners to lead change in a collaborative way, driven by a common vision rather than the priorities of any individual organization or sector. With our diverse partnership, we speak with one voice, calling upon the nation to make suicide prevention a priority and infusing effective suicide prevention strategies into all sectors of society.

Updating the National Strategy

An important first step and early accomplishment for the Action Alliance was releasing a revised *National Strategy*. After the original *National Strategy* was developed in 2001, the suicide prevention field advanced briskly, bolstered by new discoveries regarding what worked to prevent suicide. In 2012, the Action Alliance, in collaboration with the U.S. Surgeon General, took on an ambitious effort to incorporate this new knowledge and prioritize systems-level changes necessary to reduce the national suicide rate. To ensure that the revised 2012 *National Strategy* was guided by diverse perspectives, we convened our national partners from suicide prevention non-profit organizations and public sector groups, as well as engaged multiple stakeholders including suicide prevention experts, health care providers, people with lived experience, faith community leaders, government representatives, and many others. The updated *National Strategy* guides our nation's suicide prevention efforts today.



It's not solely the job of health care or the government to take on suicide. Non-profits, NGOs, corporations, cultural influencers, and national associations all have a role to play and have vested interest in the wellness and health of the citizens of the U.S. The Action Alliance allows us to be working from the same road map to achieve the greatest collective impact."

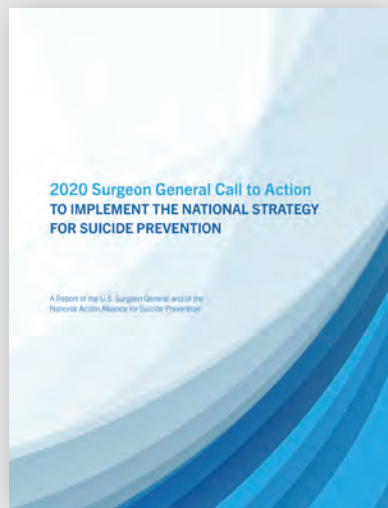
Mark Weber, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Public Affairs/
Human Services, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services



Advancing the National Strategy

The *National Strategy* provides a road map for suicide prevention that outlines what suicide prevention efforts should do and provides guidance to all societal sectors on how they can contribute. Since the updated *National Strategy* was released, we have made tremendous progress toward achieving its goals and objectives. This report highlights a few of our accomplishments in the three key areas for advancing the *National Strategy*: scaling up proven suicide prevention interventions, empowering sectors and communities, and changing the national narrative regarding suicide prevention.

In addition, we have also collaborated with the U.S. Surgeon General and other public and private sector partners to identify suicide prevention priorities for the nation for the coming years. These key actions, which support advancement of the goals and objectives of the *National Strategy*, are presented in the *2020 Surgeon General Call to Action to Implement the National Strategy for Suicide Prevention*. The Call to Action (1) sets forth a vision for suicide prevention which emphasizes the critical role that societal-level factors play in suicide prevention; (2) identifies clinical and community-based approaches that have demonstrated effectiveness and need to be brought to scale; and (3) calls on every one of us to make a difference in protecting our family members, friends, coworkers, and neighbors from suicide.



A Call to Action is exactly the right vehicle at the present time. We need to identify and utilize best strategies that have the best potential to reduce suicide and save lives."

Richard McKeon, Chief, Suicide Prevention Branch,
Center for Mental Health Services, Substance Abuse
and Mental Health Services Administration

Together with our many partners, we will engage all sectors in taking action to advance our *National Strategy*.

ADVANCING OUR STRATEGIC APPROACH

The *National Strategy* emphasizes that prevention efforts must use a comprehensive approach that combines strategies addressing risk and protective factors at multiple levels: individual, relationship, community, and societal. It also indicates that suicide prevention efforts are more likely to succeed when they are driven by data and research, guided by the voices of lived experience, and infused with safe and positive messaging.



Driven by Data and Research

Suicide prevention efforts must be based on current data about groups at risk, relevant risk and protective factors, and the effectiveness of particular approaches. To advance improvements in suicide research, one of the Action Alliance's first efforts examined existing research as reflected in *A Prioritized Research Agenda for Suicide Prevention: An Action Plan to Save Lives*. The agenda is an action-oriented call to the suicide prevention field to align efforts to more directly prevent suicide attempts and save lives.

We also released the first-ever [portfolio analyses of suicide prevention research efforts](#). These analyses showed that investments in suicide research were severely lagging relative to research on other leading causes of death, such as heart disease, diabetes, and cancer. Findings suggested that a large-scale research investment focused on a comprehensive prevention strategy and timely and effective evidence-based interventions could save thousands of lives per year.

These three core principles guide our actions and our suicide prevention efforts.



The revised *National Strategy* emphasizes the role that every sector and every American has in protecting friends, family members, and colleagues from suicide. This was a substantial milestone for our nation. Collectively—as policymakers, health care systems, the media, and the American public—we are following a road map that has proven potential to save lives and restore hope in the U.S.”

Jerry Reed, Senior Vice President for Practice Leadership, Education Development Center



Guided by Individuals with Lived Experience

The Action Alliance understands the importance of ensuring that each suicide prevention effort is guided by the unique perspectives and insights of individuals who have lost someone to suicide or have experienced a suicidal crisis themselves. People who have direct experience with suicide—and the loved ones who have walked alongside them—have a wealth of knowledge and insights to contribute to suicide prevention. These experiences are key to improving how people at risk for suicide are perceived and cared for in diverse settings.

In addition to ensuring that our efforts are guided by lived experience, we also encourage and help others to do the same. Our groundbreaking report *The Way Forward: Pathways to Hope, Recovery, and Wellness with Insights from Lived Experience*, which identifies core values for engaging individuals with lived experience to inform and enhance suicide prevention efforts, has become an important resource for the field.



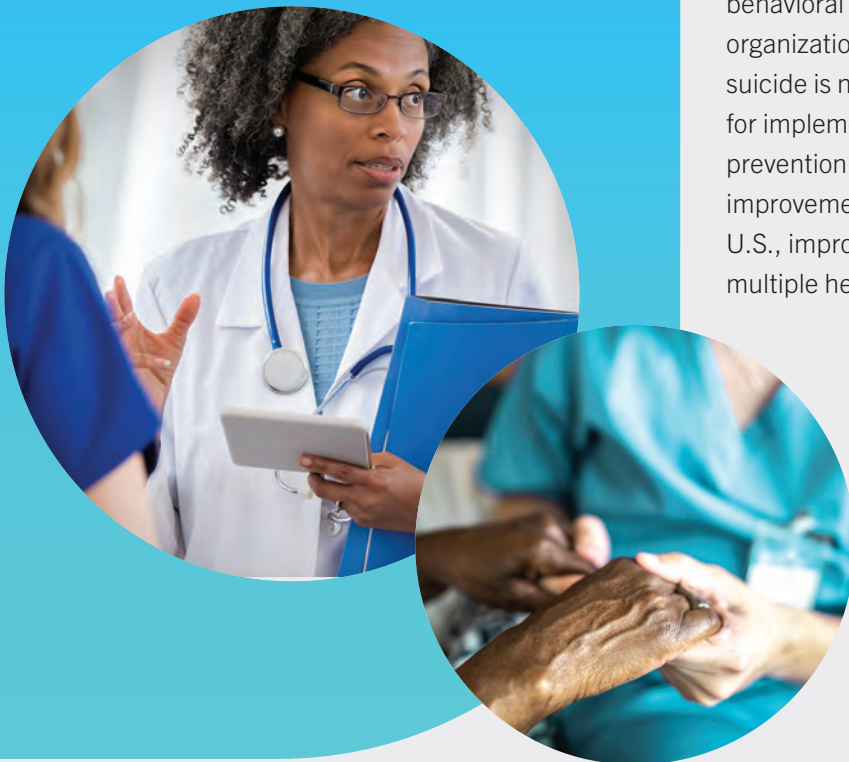
Infused with Safe and Positive Messaging

In all our work across diverse sectors, we ensure that messages about suicide are based on the latest evidence of what works and are tailored to meet the unique needs and strengths of each audience. We know that narratives and storytelling—particularly stories that share the lived experience of individuals impacted by suicide—are powerful tools to shape perspectives about suicide and motivate diverse groups to become involved in prevention. Sharing these stories promotes compassion and respect for individuals in crisis and increases hope and healing.

SCALING UP INNOVATION

Identifying What Works and Bringing It to Scale

Knowing what works to prevent suicide is critically important—but it's not enough. To truly make a difference, we are bringing to scale proven approaches that we know have the potential to make large, sustainable improvements that will save lives.



Strengthening Suicide Care

Most people who died by suicide were seen in a health care setting in the months preceding their death.^{3,4} These contacts with health care providers are missed opportunities to detect risk, ensure safety, and support care and recovery.

Guided by the *National Strategy's* call to make suicide prevention a core component of health care, we set out to ensure that people at risk for suicide are provided with evidence-based care that is respectful and compassionate, meets their needs, and leads to healing and resilience. Using our unique capability to quickly mobilize critical stakeholders—health care systems and providers, suicide prevention experts, and people with lived experience—we are increasing the adoption of evidence-based approaches across multiple settings.

Perhaps the best-known example of our work is the [Zero Suicide](#) framework for suicide care in health and behavioral health systems. Zero Suicide is both an organizational commitment to creating a culture where suicide is no longer acceptable as well as a set of practices for implementing a comprehensive approach to suicide prevention centered around patient safety and quality improvement. Zero Suicide is now widely used across the U.S., improving suicide care delivery and outcomes in multiple health care systems.

An Early Adopter of Zero Suicide

Centerstone TN, serving more than 60,000 patients a year across 50 behavioral health facilities, started a systemwide Zero Suicide initiative to ensure that all persons at risk for suicide were appropriately identified, treated, and monitored. In three years, suicide rates among patients decreased by 64 percent.

After witnessing the improved outcomes, Centerstone is expanding use of the Zero Suicide framework across its behavioral health facilities in other states and promoting its adoption on local, national, and global fronts.

SUICIDE RATES DECREASED BY 64%



Improving Crisis Care

Another area of impact relates to changing the way communities respond to individuals in crisis. In many communities, available crisis services were often limited in scope and failed to ensure long-term safety and recovery. To keep these individuals safe, a new approach was needed—one resembling an air traffic control system that tracks aircraft from takeoff through landing. Individuals at risk for suicide need a similar system of crisis care, in which someone looks out for them at all times—especially during transitions in care when suicide risk is elevated.



Health care leaders have a significant responsibility to create and sustain an environment that provides safety and support and provides hope for individuals who feel hopeless. Through our work with the Action Alliance, we are providing innovative, actionable solutions to reduce suicide and transform health care systems.”

Karen E. Johnson, Senior Vice President, Clinical Services and Division Compliance Officer, Behavioral Health Division, Universal Health Services, Inc.

Building on the experience of states that had successfully applied this aviation-inspired approach, we developed [Crisis Now: Transforming Services Is Within Our Reach](#).

The report identified the core elements of an integrated and comprehensive system of crisis care that provides immediate and long-term support to persons in crisis, wherever they are and whenever they need it. Working with our public and private partners, we launched the [Crisis Now](#) initiative, which supports implementation of the report’s recommendations. The Crisis Now initiative has sparked extensive activity in the field. As a result of the momentum generated by these efforts—and increased commitment from our partners in the public and private sectors—states and communities are increasingly adopting these core elements as a road map for their crisis care efforts.

Advancing Standard Care and Care Transitions

The Action Alliance’s [Recommended Standard Care for People with Suicide Risk](#) promotes elements of care that should be standard to ensure people at risk are identified and supported in primary care, outpatient behavioral health care, the emergency department, and inpatient behavioral health care.

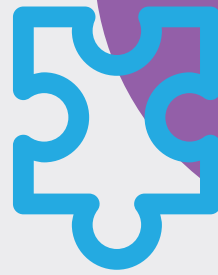
Recognizing the increased suicide risk when a patient is transitioning between levels of care, the Action Alliance’s [Best Practices in Care Transitions for Individuals with Suicide Risk: Inpatient to Outpatient Care](#) ensures that inpatient and outpatient providers are able to implement policies and practices to improve care transitions and reduce suicide risk.



EMPOWERING SECTORS & COMMUNITIES

Every Sector Holds a Piece of the Puzzle

Suicide is not just a mental health problem or a public health problem—it is both. Effective suicide prevention requires a comprehensive approach that combines multiple strategies and involves every sector of society. The Action Alliance empowers sectors and communities to actively engage in suicide prevention.



Engaging Communities of Faith

Faith communities of all traditions play an important role in supporting the development of positive social connections and helping individuals cope with adversity. Faith leaders are on the frontlines of helping people during times of emotional or spiritual crisis. Moreover, congregations offer the faith and hope needed to get through the most difficult of times.

Faith. Hope. Life.

Faith.Hope.Life. is a campaign aimed at involving every faith community in the United States, regardless of creed, in suicide prevention.



We have worked closely with faith leaders to understand their unique needs and develop the best solutions to support them and their communities. Our [Faith.Hope.Life.](#) campaign and annual [National Weekend of Prayer for Faith, Hope, & Life](#) invite faith communities nationwide to join in prayer for those who have been touched by suicide, for those who are dealing with mental health concerns and feelings of hopelessness, and for the people who love and care for them. The National Weekend of Prayer has reached thousands of faith communities nationwide and has received the support of influential faith leaders; national faith-based organizations; and federal, state, and local leaders.

“In the same way faith community members come together to lift up those who are struggling with physical illness, like cancer or heart disease, we also can lift up and offer care and hope for persons struggling with mental or emotional concerns, like thoughts of suicide. Faith communities play an integral role in suicide prevention.”

Rev. Talitha Arnold, Senior Minister, United Church of Santa Fe

Cultivating Leadership in Construction

Employers play a critical role in suicide prevention. We work with sector leaders to promote mental health and prevent suicide within specific sectors. EXCOM leadership from the Action Alliance's [Workplace Task Force](#) spurred innovation within the construction industry and led to the launch of the [Construction Industry Alliance for Suicide Prevention](#) to provide resources, support, and innovation to unite the construction industry's efforts to prevent suicide.

Collaborating with the Sport Sector

Recognizing the extensive reach and influence of the sport industry, we work with partners in the [sport sector](#) to leverage the cultural influence of sport to advance national suicide prevention efforts and sport-sector-specific efforts. In 2019, we launched the [Stay in the Game Network](#), a sport-sector-led initiative aimed at year-round collaboration between national mental health and suicide prevention experts and leaders in the U.S. sport industry.

Supporting Public Safety Professionals

Through its [Public Safety Task Force](#), the Action Alliance leads efforts to protect our public safety professionals, including law enforcement officers, firefighters, emergency medical service providers, corrections officers, and dispatchers. We are convening public and private national public safety leaders to build a shared vision for a comprehensive, national response to suicide among public safety professionals; identify best practices and challenges around suicide prevention in the public safety sector; and facilitate cross-sector connections to spark innovative, actionable solutions.

Addressing Lethal Means

Our recently released guidance [Lethal Means and Suicide Prevention: A Guide for Community and Industry Leaders](#) presents lifesaving actions that governments, organizations, and industries are taking to reduce access to lethal means (e.g., firearms and poisons) during times of crisis.



EXAMPLE

Partnering with the Railroad Industry to Prevent Suicide

Every year, hundreds of Americans die by suicide on our nation's railways, impacting not only nearby communities and their families but also railroad employees and operations.

Working with EXCOM member Union Pacific Rail (UP), our joint efforts included a meeting of the nation's health plans to discuss the role of payers in improving suicide care, a two-day rail industry summit on suicide prevention attended by representatives from several large railroads, and an analysis of suicide on the rails to identify locations of increased suicides to inform UP-supported community suicide prevention efforts.

Additionally, UP has leveraged its role as a major corporate employer and Action Alliance partner to infuse suicide prevention into its work, thereby engaging all employees and having an impact across all rail lines and nearby communities.

CHANGING THE NATIONAL NARRATIVE

Strengthening Messages of Hope, Connectedness, and Resilience

As a country, we need to talk openly about suicide—in the same way we talk about other public health issues, such as diabetes or cancer.

Early on, we identified changing the way we talk about suicide and suicide prevention as an important priority area. This priority is closely aligned with a consistent theme of the *National Strategy*: to foster positive public dialogue; counter shame, prejudice, and silence; and build public support for suicide prevention. While ensuring safe and responsible messaging is part of every effort we lead, much of our work to advance this priority focuses on three audiences for fostering new ways of thinking and communicating about suicide: the entertainment industry, the news media, and public messengers.



Promoting Safe Portrayals in Entertainment

Never before have we seen such readiness within the entertainment sector to become involved in suicide prevention. To harness this momentum and help the entertainment sector embrace its role in suicide prevention, we convened experts from the suicide prevention field and the entertainment sector to develop the [*National Recommendations for Depicting Suicide*](#), which aims to help the entertainment industry tell more balanced and authentic stories involving suicide and suicide prevention.

Since the recommendations were released, we have collaborated with sector leaders in the entertainment industry to share best practices and guidance to support the content development process.



“The news media plays an important role in helping the public understand facts and details about suicides that occur in our communities. News media also help educate the public on the complexity of suicide and the hope in suicide prevention. The Poynter Institute is proud to support efforts to educate and inform journalists, to assist in the development of best reporting practices, and to collaborate with the National Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention and their partners. Newsrooms can be part of the solution when it comes to reducing suicide rates and building more resilient communities.”

Kelly McBride, Senior Vice President and Chair of
Craig Newmark Center for Ethics and Leadership, Poynter Institute

Supporting Responsible News Coverage

To advance Goal 4 of the *National Strategy*, which calls for news organizations to develop and implement policies and practices that address safe and responsible reporting on suicide, we continuously engage the news media sector to encourage use of the [Recommendations for Reporting on Suicide](#). Additionally, we developed a curriculum to train journalists on how to cover suicide and mental health accurately and responsibly.

We know that journalists face many constraints in their day-to-day reporting, such as competing demands for coverage and being overwhelmed with press releases



from different groups. To help them get the story right when addressing emerging news related to suicide, we work closely with our partners to develop coordinated and uniformed media responses from the field. These efforts have been effective in generating media coverage focused on best practices and promoting help and hope in many influential outlets, such as *Reuters*, *AP*, the *Washington Post*, *USA Today*, and *ABC News*. We also routinely develop messaging guidance for the field when speaking to media so that we are speaking with one voice.

Guiding and Enhancing Public Messaging

While resources exist to help the news media generate safer coverage about suicide, similar guidance for others communicating publicly about suicide was lacking. To address this need, we developed the [Framework for Successful Messaging](#). This resource outlines how anyone publicly messaging about suicide and suicide prevention can create messaging that is strategic and safe, contributes to a positive narrative, and makes use of relevant guidelines and best practices.



THE NEXT 10 YEARS

Building on a Solid Foundation and Propelling Progress

Working together with our partners, the National Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention has made significant progress over the past 10 years. In the coming years, we will build upon the following to engage new partners in implementing the *2020 Surgeon General Call to Action*.

THE STRONG
FOUNDATION
WE HAVE
CREATED

The Call to Action reinforces key priorities from the *National Strategy* that can have significant impact if implemented more widely and identifies key areas where new efforts are needed.

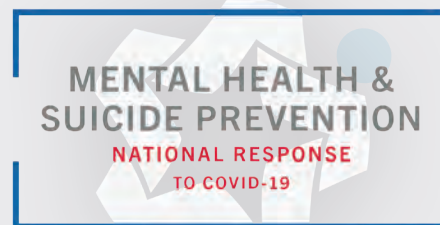
We will also continue to lead a multi-sector response to the COVID-19 pandemic. According to a recent [Gallup online survey](#), Americans say their mental health is suffering more than their physical or financial health due to COVID-19.⁵ Recognizing the magnitude of the problem, we have mobilized diverse sectors to collectively lead a coordinated mental health and suicide prevention response effort during and in the aftermath of the pandemic through our [Mental Health & Suicide Prevention National Response to COVID-19](#). This effort brings together the best in science, innovation, and leadership to create sustainable and comprehensive solutions to the impacts of the pandemic, which will

THE
MOMENTUM
WE HAVE
SPARKED

ultimately help us achieve a stronger mental health and suicide prevention system.

While we do not minimize the significance of the challenges we now face, we know that we are stronger today than we were 10 years ago. We now have a solid foundation that allows us to quickly mobilize an effective response. We must make the best use of the infrastructure we have created and of the advancements we have achieved through our collaborative efforts to make a real difference in reducing suicide in the nation.

THE
PROGRESS
WE HAVE
ACHIEVED



An initiative of the National Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention

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“

Over the last two decades, we've built a national infrastructure, and we are now at a tipping point. Now is the time to accentuate the things that have the greatest potential to reduce suicide rates. Together we're stronger, and I know now is the time for us to really have an impact on the risk of suicide and the rates of suicide in this country.”

Vice Admiral Jerome M. Adams, U.S. Surgeon General

JOIN US

The Action Alliance looks forward to strengthening our existing partnerships, engaging new sector partners, and continuing to move the nation's suicide prevention efforts forward in the decade to come. If you share our commitment and want to help support our suicide prevention efforts, we encourage you to join us.

theactionalliance.org



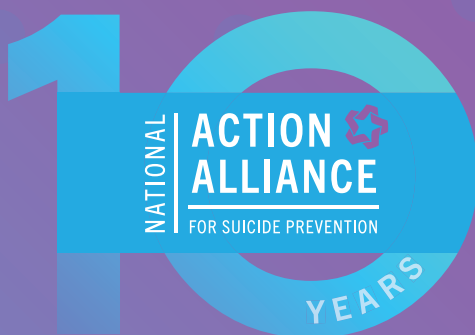


There is a sense of urgency now more than ever before to address suicide in our nation. We know more about who is at greatest risk and what is working to help save lives. Now it is time to leverage the strong foundation the Action Alliance has built over the past 10 years and do even more to drive national suicide prevention efforts forward by engaging diverse public and private sector partners in our work.”

Co-Chairs of the Action Alliance Executive Committee

Robert W. Turner, Senior Vice President, Retired, Union Pacific Corporation

Carolyn M. Clancy, MD, Deputy Under Secretary for Health for Discovery, Education, and Affiliate Networks, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs



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