

MEDIA STATEMENT

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A media statement prepared by the National Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention (Action Alliance) in response to newly-released 2018 suicide data.

***Action Alliance Statement on the New CDC Mortality Data Showing Rise in Suicide Rates
New figures reinforce the urgent need for investment around suicide prevention—especially from the
private sector***

WASHINGTON, DC (January 30, 2020) – “The [new data released today](#) by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s (CDC) National Center for Health Statistics show suicide rates continue to increase, while drug overdose rates have seen a slight decline. In 2018 alone, suicide claimed 48,344 lives—a 1.4% increase in suicide rates from 2017—with more than 10 million additional individuals experiencing thoughts of suicide—reinforcing the enormous toll suicide takes on individuals, families, and communities. The steady increase in rates of suicide-related death over the past decade is a stark reminder that we are losing too many Americans to *preventable* issues, like suicide, and underscores the critical need for our country to prioritize suicide prevention—now.

Suicide must be addressed on the same level, and with the same urgency, as we address other public health issues, such as drug overdoses, heart disease, cancer, stroke, or HIV/AIDS—all of which have seen a decrease in rates following years of concentrated national efforts. Most recently, we have seen the political will, private sector mobilization, and the nation’s commitment to the issue of drug overdose deaths, which likely contributed to [a 4.1% decrease in 2018](#). We urgently need the same focused attention and level of commitment made to suicide prevention.

Suicide will continue to affect millions of Americans each year if both the public and private sectors neglect to invest the necessary time, energy, and resources into supporting more robust research and programming, building an effective crisis infrastructure, and scaling up proven evidence-based solutions.

- **Increasing substantial investments in suicide prevention research and programs**
While billions of research dollars have been spent looking into other preventable health conditions, funding for suicide prevention research pales in comparison. Research plays a critical role in helping to identify populations who are at highest risk and measuring the effectiveness of suicide prevention solutions. We need more robust investments in research—from both the public and private sectors—in order to identify effective suicide prevention approaches that will save lives, as well as investments in implementing those evidence-based approaches.

- **Improving our nation’s crisis services**

A coordinated crisis care network often is a community’s first line of defense when it comes to suicidal crises. Without it, individuals may not receive the timely care they need, and deserve. We must build an adequate, sustainable, coordinated, and successful nationwide crisis system to meet these needs. While a three-digit, easy to remember number—recently proposed by the FCC and members of Congress—is a step in the right direction, we must also ensure the nation’s crisis infrastructure is provided the financial support needed to serve the millions of Americans who are in crisis each year.

- **Scaling up proven evidence-based solutions**

With the majority of people visiting a doctor in the month prior to a suicide attempt, we know that an essential part of effective suicide prevention is working with health care systems to ensure that people who may be at risk for suicide receive access to the services and treatment they need. It’s imperative that we not miss this opportunity for intervention and prevention in health care setting. Widespread adoption and implementation of the comprehensive, evidence-based [Zero Suicide approach](#) or [Recommended Standard Care](#) for health systems have the potential to demonstrate significant reductions in suicide. In addition, evidence-based community approaches, such as [Counseling on Access to Lethal Means](#) (CALM) or the [Good Behavior Game](#), have been shown to minimize suicide risk. We must invest in scaling up these and other suicide prevention models that have shown effectiveness in saving lives.

Addressing suicide is not simply the role of federal agencies within the public sector. The private sector also has an inherent responsibility and a unique role in addressing the growing issue of suicide. For example, the private sector can integrate mental wellness and suicide prevention best practices into their workplace culture, including their employee assistance programs and policies, which would reach the more than 157 million Americans who are part of today’s workforce. Just as suicide is not caused by one single factor, if we want to effectively reduce the rates of suicide we need both federal partners and non-federal partners working together to prioritize and invest in this issue.

As the nation’s only public-private partnership for suicide prevention advancing the [National Strategy for Suicide Prevention](#), we are calling on leaders from all sectors—both traditional and non-traditional—to step up and make suicide prevention a national priority by becoming engaged in the issue and bringing resources to bear. With thousands of American lives at stake each year, the time to act is now.”

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FOR MEDIA PARTNERS:

Research shows that the media may influence suicide rates by the way they report on suicide. Evidence suggests that when the media tell stories of people positively coping in suicidal moments, more suicides can be prevented. We urge all members of the media working on these stories to refer to the [Recommendations for Reporting on Suicide](#) for best practices for safely and accurately reporting on suicide (such as including the [National Suicide Prevention Lifeline 800-273-TALK \[8255\]](#)). For stories of persons with lived experience of suicidality and finding hope, refer to www.lifelineforattempt survivors.org.

NATIONAL ACTION ALLIANCE FOR SUICIDE PREVENTION:

The [National Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention](#) is the public-private partnership working to advance the [National Strategy for Suicide Prevention](#) and make suicide prevention a national priority. The [Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration](#) provides funding to [EDC](#) to operate and manage the Secretariat for the Action Alliance, which was launched in 2010. Learn more at theactionalliance.org and join the conversation on suicide prevention by following the Action Alliance on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [LinkedIn](#), and [YouTube](#).