

Twenty-five years ago, Surgeon General Dr. David Satcher issued the ground-breaking *Call to Action to Prevent Suicide*. This call ultimately led to the first *National Strategy for Suicide Prevention* in the United States in 2001.

Since that time, through the next strategy in 2012, until today, suicide prevention efforts have expanded significantly, ranging from advances in timeliness of data, to the growth in the science of suicide prevention, the development of new treatments, and increased research. People across the country are now aware more than ever that suicide is a pressing public health problem that is preventable. However, much more work is necessary to match the challenge of rising suicide rates.

The new 2024 *National Strategy for Suicide Prevention* (*National Strategy*) is meant to address gaps in the field and to guide, motivate, and promote a more coordinated and comprehensive approach to suicide prevention in communities across the country. The comprehensive approach addresses the many factors associated with suicide, with the recognition that there is no single solution. It seeks to prevent suicide risk in the first place (upstream prevention), identify and support people with increased risk through treatment and crisis intervention (downstream prevention), prevent reattempts, promote long-term recovery, and support survivors of suicide loss.

Carrying out the comprehensive approach relies on collaboration with public and private sector partners, people with suicide-centered lived experience, and people in populations disproportionately affected by suicide and suicide attempts. The foundation of comprehensive prevention includes a strong suicide prevention infrastructure at all levels, a competent and well-trained workforce, the use of quality data to help drive decision-making, and a strong science base, as laid out in the new strategy.

For the first time, in 2024, the *National Strategy* takes a “whole of government” approach. It was developed in collaboration with a federal Interagency Work Group, consisting of over 20 agencies and offices in 10 departments across the federal government. Support came from the Suicide Prevention Resource Center (SPRC) and the National Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention (Action Alliance), guided by a project management team co-led by officials at the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), alongside the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) and the U.S. Department of Health

and Human Services' Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation (ASPE/HHS). Input and feedback from outside of the federal government came from a national needs assessment reaching more than 2,000 respondents and multiple listening sessions with people with lived experience, populations disproportionately affected by suicide, community members, practitioners, and suicide prevention experts.

The 2024 *National Strategy* builds upon the previous 2012 *National Strategy*. It addresses gaps and incorporates advances in the field. It specifically addresses health equity, youth and social media, and the intersection of suicide and substance use. Other examples of new content include the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline, expanded workplace suicide prevention, and an increased focus on social determinants of health. These topics are addressed within the *National Strategy's* four Strategic Directions—Community-Based Suicide Prevention; Treatment and Crisis Services; Surveillance, Quality Improvement, and Research; and Health Equity in Suicide Prevention—and related Goals.

Strategic Direction 1: Community-Based Suicide Prevention

- **Goal 1:** Establish effective, broad-based, collaborative, and sustainable suicide prevention partnerships.
- **Goal 2:** Support upstream comprehensive community-based suicide prevention.
- **Goal 3:** Reduce access to lethal means among people at risk of suicide.
- **Goal 4:** Conduct postvention and support people with suicide-centered lived experience.
- **Goal 5:** Integrate suicide prevention into the culture of the workplace and into other community settings.
- **Goal 6:** Build and sustain suicide prevention infrastructure at the state, tribal, local, and territorial levels.
- **Goal 7:** Implement research-informed suicide prevention communication activities in diverse populations using best practices from communication science.

Strategic Direction 2: Treatment and Crisis Services

- **Goal 8:** Implement effective suicide prevention services as a core component of health care.
- **Goal 9:** Improve the quality and accessibility of crisis care services across all communities.

Strategic Direction 3: Surveillance, Quality Improvement, and Research

- **Goal 10:** Improve the quality, timeliness, scope, usefulness, and accessibility of data needed for suicide-related surveillance, research, evaluation, and quality improvement.
- **Goal 11:** Promote and support research on suicide prevention.

Strategic Direction 4: Health Equity in Suicide Prevention

- **Goal 12:** Embed health equity into all comprehensive suicide prevention activities.
- **Goal 13:** Implement comprehensive suicide prevention strategies for populations disproportionately affected by suicide, with a focus on historically marginalized communities, persons with suicide-centered lived experience, and youth.
- **Goal 14:** Create an equitable and diverse suicide prevention workforce that is equipped and supported to address the needs of the communities they serve.
- **Goal 15:** Improve and expand effective suicide prevention programs for populations disproportionately impacted by suicide across the life span through improved data, research, and evaluation.

For the first time, the *National Strategy* includes a *Federal Action Plan*. This plan is designed to improve accountability for suicide prevention efforts and to maximize federal infrastructure. Federal agencies committed to specific, short-term actions related to the goals and objectives included in the Strategy that they will carry out over the next three years. Following the release of the *National Strategy*, a plan will be developed to monitor and evaluate the *Federal Action Plan* and the *National Strategy*, overall. The federal government and the Action Alliance will serve as joint stewards, monitoring progress, identifying successes and barriers, and providing solutions for improvement.

This 2024 *National Strategy*, with its “whole of government” and comprehensive approach alongside the *Federal Action Plan* provides a path forward that together, with communities and partners, can make a difference and help address our national challenge to prevent suicide.



NATIONAL ACTION ALLIANCE
FOR SUICIDE PREVENTION

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