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Increase in adult suicides shows need to connect Minnesotans to hope and help

State officials are releasing the most recent suicide data and are highlighting opportunities for prevention, including raising awareness of suicide warning signs and the fact that mental illness is treatable.

In 2015 there were 726 suicide deaths reported in Minnesota, up from 686, or an increase of 6 percent, from 2014. The 2015 rate was 13.1 per year per 100,000 Minnesotans up from 12.2 in 2014. Previously, the highest rate was 13 per 100,000 in 1986 (541 deaths). Firearms continue to be the leading method of suicide.

"Today's news clarifies that we must do more to support and connect with those who are suffering and contemplating suicide," said Minnesota Commissioner of Health Dr. Ed Ehlinger. "We know suicides are preventable. We have seen progress in preventing youth suicide. We must focus on helping adult men and others find hope and help." Factors such as meaningful relationships, coping skills and safe and supportive communities can decrease the risk of suicidal thoughts and behaviors.

Suicides among men drove Minnesota's increase from 2014 to 2015. The rate among men increased to 20.5 per 100,000. The rate among women stayed stable at 5.9 per 100,000. Half of the increase in suicides from 2014 to 2015 occurred among white men ages 25 to 34.

The number of suicides went down for Minnesota residents under 25 (from 119 in 2014 to 114 in 2015). Most prevention efforts have focused on this age group in recent years.

Annual rates of suicide have been trending upward nationally and in Minnesota since reaching an all-time low in Minnesota of 8.9 per 100,000 in the year 2000.

"This alarming rise in the number of suicides in Minnesota reinforces for us the need for a continuum of mental health care in our communities – so that people can get help when they need it," said Minnesota Department of Human Services Commissioner Emily Piper. "Let us never forget that this is not about statistics; each and every one of these 726 deaths is someone's friend, relative and neighbor. We need to work together by focusing on prevention."

Suicides among American Indian Minnesotans, including youth, and suicides among 45-64 year-old Minnesotans were stable from 2014 to 2015. Both groups were identified as at-risk in the [Minnesota State Suicide Prevention Plan](#).

Minnesota's prevention efforts are based on evidence that suicides are preventable and mental illness is treatable. Key strategies are included in the 2015-2020 state suicide prevention plan. This plan calls for a comprehensive, public health approach of promoting health, wellness and connectedness in communities. Key partners include school personnel, coaches, faith communities, law enforcement, tribal nations and mental health care practitioners.

"More training of healthcare professionals and community members along with follow-up care is important in preventing suicides," said Dr. Dan Reidenberg, Executive Director of SAVE.

A key goal is assisting health care professionals and others to identify individuals at risk for suicidal behavior, assess them, and refer them to treatments, including those for underlying conditions such as mental illness and substance abuse. Limiting access to lethal means in a time of crisis is also effective in preventing deaths and suicide attempts.

The 2015 Legislature invested \$47 million in new spending for mental health services. This additional funding is the largest investment in state history. Investments include an additional \$3 million for mobile mental health crisis grants to the Minnesota Department of Human Services and \$16.6 million for mental health teams to offer psychiatric services to people at home and other locations outside of traditional clinic settings. The teams respond to a crisis, work to assess the people involved, resolve the crisis and link people to needed services. MDH is also implementing a public health data tool, the Minnesota Violent Death Reporting System, that will better describe the circumstances leading up to deaths and identify areas for prevention or system changes to help decrease suicides in Minnesota.

11 warning signs of suicide

(The more signs a person exhibits, the greater the risk.)

1. Talking about wanting to die.
2. Looking for a way to kill oneself.
3. Talking about feeling hopeless or having no purpose.
4. Talking about feeling trapped or in unbearable pain.
5. Talking about being a burden to others.
6. Increasing the use of alcohol or other drugs.
7. Acting anxious, agitated or reckless.
8. Sleeping too little or too much.
9. Withdrawing or feeling isolated.
10. Showing rage or talking about seeking revenge.
11. Displaying extreme mood swings.

Tips for those concerned about a friend or loved one

- Call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-TALK (8255). Save it in your phone contacts.
- Do not leave the person alone.
- Remove firearms, alcohol, drugs or sharp objects that could be used in a suicide attempt.
- Take the person to an emergency room or seek help from a medical or mental health professional.

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