

# Opportunities for Improving Suicide Prevention in 2023

## Introduction

Ohio's mental health care system saw improvements in 2022, including:

- The initial introduction of the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline
- Implementation of the Zero Suicide framework into health centers
- Increased awareness and partnerships among health care providers
- An exciting data report through a suicide syndromic system that shares data on suicide attempts in emergency rooms across Ohio on a weekly basis

However, with these improvements, there still is much more that needs to be done. In March 2022, Governor Mike DeWine challenged Ohio to build the system of care for mental health and, as he stated, "Despite good intentions, tragically, that promise was never kept – not nationally, nor in Ohio – and the community system was never fully built."

As we begin 2023, the post-COVID impacts are being felt with preliminary numbers for suicides increasing in 2021 and early 2022. The number of those who are at risk is also increasing. To prevent further loss and in order to heal our communities, 2023 must be the year that we work together to create a system of care that provides better outcomes and support for individuals who are struggling with suicidal ideation and families who have loved ones who are suicidal or have been lost to suicide.

By prioritizing the key components listed in this report, we can work together to reverse recent trends for one of the most preventable means of death – suicide.

## 1. 988 Funding

988 was created to be the national crisis line for individuals and was implemented successfully in Ohio in July 2022. This call and text line, which is staffed by trained crisis professionals, cannot only save countless lives, but can also save thousands of visits to emergency rooms by deescalating a situation where a person is experiencing a mental health crisis. In fact, recent studies show that approximately 80% of calls can be handled via 988 without the person needing emergency services. The issue, however, is the funding mechanism that should be utilized to assure competent support for 988 is currently not in existence.

The DeWine Administration allocated funding for the initial infrastructure of 988, however, this funding ends in June, 2022 and **we must find a long-term funding stream to support this life-saving and cost-saving entry into crisis care for those in their most vulnerable moments.**

The Ohio Suicide Prevention Foundation will be supporting efforts to ensure sustainable funding for 988. Whether through a specified fund and allocated funding allotment in the State of Ohio budget process or applying a small fee to cell phone statements, we are committed to providing this opportunity to make sure that every Ohioan has access to quality care to prevent suicide.

## 2. Ohio Budget

The issues of mental health wellness and suicide prevention are crucial to creating a productive workforce, healthy families, and healthy neighborhoods. With five people lost to suicide every day in Ohio, these losses traumatize families and communities, so to prioritize funding for mental health and suicide prevention in the 2024-2025 is key to ensuring that our neighborhoods are productive and healthy. Investments in services such as 988, crisis care, student wellness, mental health treatment, and housing can pay big dividends for the health of our State and the current and future workforce to meet demands for individuals working in all industries.

**Funding mental health treatment and prevention programs goes further than just improving quality of life – it can also increase Ohio's opportunity to improve economic growth.** According to a 2018 study by researchers at Penn State University, poor mental health ranks as one of the costliest forms of sickness for U.S. workers and may sap billions of dollars from the country's income growth. In an analysis of economic and demographic data from 2008 to 2014, the researchers found that a single extra poor mental health day in a month was associated with a 1.84 percent drop in the per capita real income growth rate, resulting in \$53 billion less total income each year. The researchers suggest that investing in mental health resources may be one way of lowering the economic costs of poor mental health, particularly in harder-hit rural counties.

### 3. Entry to Crisis Care

A primary question that OSPF receives from families is what can be done for a loved one who is experiencing a mental health crisis. Currently, the most common options are to go to a hospital emergency room or to dispatch a law enforcement officer.

**Instituting crisis services is an integral component of addressing mental illness and suicide in communities in Ohio.** According to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, optimum outcomes can be obtained with states instituting three entryways into care for someone experiencing a mental health crisis. These are:

1. Regional Crisis/988 Call Center: Regional 24/7 clinically staffed call center that offers quality coordination of crisis care in real-time;
2. Crisis Mobile Team Response: Mobile crisis teams available to reach any person in the service area in his or her home, workplace, or any other community-based location of the individual in crisis in a timely manner; and
3. Crisis Receiving and Stabilization Facilities: Facilities providing short-term (under 24 hours) observation and crisis stabilization services to all referrals in a home-like, non-hospital environment.

By investing in these crisis-care strategies, we not only improve the opportunities for longterm mental health wellness, we also save the valuable time of law enforcement officers to attend to public safety issues and emergency room staff to attend to physical health emergencies.

### 4. Post-Suicide Care

Five Ohio families experience a loss of a loved one every day to suicide and the questions and grief surrounding those losses are vast. People coping with this kind of loss often need more support than others, but may get less. There are various explanations for this. Suicide is a difficult subject to contemplate. Survivors may be reluctant to confide that the death was self-inflicted. And when others know the circumstances of the death, they may feel uncertain about how to offer help. Research shows that people who've recently lost someone through suicide are at increased risk for thinking about, planning, or attempting suicide.

Every sector of a community is impacted when a person dies by suicide – with employers, schools, churches, and the general community paralyzed on how to deal with this unfathomable tragedy. **By creating a post-suicide network of care, where individuals and families can find support from the moments after a suicide to longterm support like mental health treatment, we can hasten their ability to begin healing.** Establishing community LOSS teams after a suicide, prioritizing post-suicide grief treatment and counseling, and creating support groups can help loved ones, friends, and community members begin the long and difficult grieving process.



*OSPF staff joined state, local, and philanthropic partners from Ohio in touring Arizona crisis services. As the State of Ohio focuses on improved crisis care for individuals and families experiencing a behavioral health crisis, being able to see crisis coordination in action is crucial.*

*In conclusion, if Ohio invests in and prioritizes suicide prevention and mental health care, not only can better lives be led, but numerous cost savings can be found. 2023 can be the year to truly build a system of care that helps millions of Ohioans and can lower the number of suicides in the Buckeye State.*

#### References

1. Penn State. "Poor mental health days may cost the economy billions of dollars." ScienceDaily, 30 July 2018. [www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2018/07/180730120359.htm](http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2018/07/180730120359.htm). Accessed January 1, 2023.

#### ABOUT OHIO SUICIDE PREVENTION FOUNDATION

OSPF gives hope to those in crisis, strength to those in the struggle, and comfort to those in grief. OSPF is a non-profit organization that works tirelessly to help all of Ohio's communities reduce the risk of suicide. Our work includes supporting those impacted by suicide, raising awareness of mental health issues, and coordinating community resources and evidence-based prevention strategies across the state.



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