

Suicide Prevention in Ohio

2022 — YEAR IN REVIEW

At the beginning of 2022, Governor Mike DeWine made a strong challenge during his State of the State address to strengthen mental health services and the systems that support individuals and families who are struggling. In this speech, Governor DeWine stated that for mental health, “the community system was never built...So we must build it.”

To make this more challenging, the pandemic has also impacted mental health and suicide, as researchers from Boston College showed that depression and anxiety rates were six times higher in 2020 than in 2019.¹ Studies are currently being conducted to show longer-term impacts on mental health from the pandemic.

At the beginning of the pandemic, suicide numbers decreased in Ohio from a high of 1836 in 2018 to 1644 in 2020, according to data from the Ohio Department of Health. However, the preliminary number of deaths by suicide in 2021 rose to 1766, which does raise great cause for concern. In addition, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) met with six counties in Ohio in 2022 because of higher-than-average suicide deaths compared to other years.

To strengthen efforts to reduce suicide, the State of Ohio has made strides to improve opportunities for care and break stigma around suicide and mental health.

Transition to 988

In 2020, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) adopted rules to transition the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline to 988. The law gave power to the states on the strategies to enact 988 based on their system of care, however, it also gave the responsibility of funding 988 to the states.



988 Press Conference held at the Ohio Statehouse to urge lawmakers to secure and sustain funding for the Suicide Prevention Lifeline.

On July 16, 2022, this entryway into the crisis care system became “live” in Ohio. To achieve this, the Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (OHMHAS) pulled together a planning team in 2021, including the Ohio Suicide Prevention Foundation, to create the system for 988 to be operational. Additional call centers were added in the state for complete state coverage, however, this was just the first step in creating the system of care that would provide adequate, immediate care for those experiencing a mental health or suicide conference. The funding for this system is set to run out in June 2023, which could be devastating for individuals experiencing suicidal thoughts or a mental health crisis.

Partnership with Owners of Firearm Shops

During 2022, the Ohio Suicide Prevention Foundation released the Life Side Ohio campaign, which is a unique partnership with gun shop owners, including Blackwing Shooting Center; Fin, Feather, Fur; L.E.P.D.; and Vance Outdoors to promote safe-storage and other firearm safety strategies with firearm owners. Firearms account for over 50% of suicides in Ohio and by working together, gun-shop owners and the Ohio Suicide Prevention Foundation hope to reduce suicides.



Life Side Ohio partners with gun owners, gun show owners, and first responders to promote firearm safety and reduce the risk of suicides by firearms.

Veteran Suicide Prevention



Sebastian Junger, American war journalist, joins OSPF for its first Veterans Suicide Prevention Conference.

Prevention Conference, which resulted in greater understanding of the resources and support available to veterans throughout our state. This event was held in partnership with Ohio Department of Veterans Services, Star Behavioral Health Providers, Ohio Brain Injury, Warren County – Common Pleas Court, OhioMHAS, Ohio Department of Veterans Affairs, Ohio Army National Guard, and OACBHA.

Suicide Attempt Data Release

The Ohio Department of Health, through funding from the CDC, has begun delivering a weekly report on the number of suicide ideations and suicide attempts that are identified in Ohio hospital emergency departments. On average, this report has shown that there are 35-40 suspected suicide attempts daily coming into Ohio emergency rooms, while approximately 220 people are going in daily to Ohio emergency rooms for suspected suicide ideations. To put this in perspective, with research showing that 988 being able to potentially handle 80% of people contemplating suicide on the phone via mobile crisis, the cost-savings from those not having to go to emergency rooms could be substantial.

1 <https://doi.org/10.1093/tbm/ibab030>

In Ohio, the rate of veteran suicide is more than **twice as high** as the rate among adults aged 18+. Ohio was named a state to combat veteran suicide by creating the Governor's Challenge to Reduce Veteran's Suicide. As part of this effort, the Ohio Suicide Prevention Foundation brought together supporters and influencers for the Veterans Suicide

As we close out 2022, we can look at improvements that have been made, in addition to many that have not been part of this report. However, there is a massive amount of work that needs to be done. Governor DeWine put it best in his State of the State,...

“We can create the opportunity for people with mental illness or addiction to build the skills to lead joyful, meaningful lives. And if we do, it will result in reduced community costs, more people working, and more people contributing — to the vitality of their communities.”

— GOVERNOR MIKE DEWINE

Building on the improvements in 2022 can make Ohio communities healthier than ever before.

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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