



SUICIDE

"Suicide remains the third leading cause of death among young people in this country. We must focus on the underlying reasons for suicide and a comprehensive strategy to prevent them."

Dr. Ileana Arias, acting director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Injury Center

The Picture in San Diego

Nation: In 2001, suicide was the 3rd leading cause of death among persons aged 10–19 years. The most common method in this age group was by firearm (49%), followed by suffocation (mostly hanging) (38%) and poisoning (7%).

During 1992–2001 for persons 10-19 years:

- The overall suicide rate declined from 6.2 to 4.6 per 100,000 population
- Substantial *decline* in suicides by firearm while suicides by suffocation *increased*

Source: CDC. *Web-based Injury Statistics Query and Reporting System (WISQARS™)*. Atlanta, GA: U.S. Dept of HHS, CDC, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, 2004.

California:

- The age-adjusted death rate from suicide for 2000-2002 was 9.5 per 100,000 population.

San Diego County:

- The age-adjusted death rate from suicide for 2000-2002 was 11.5 per 100,000 population.

Source: California Department of Health Services, *County Health Status Profiles 2004*.

Neither the counties, nor California as a whole, met the **Healthy People 2010 National Objective** of no more than 5.0 age-adjusted deaths due to suicide per 100,000 population.



2003 Youth Risk Behavior Survey

(administered to students in grades 9-12; participation is anonymous and voluntary)

In San Diego:

- 19.4% of students seriously considered attempting suicide during the past 12 months. The national average was 16.9%.
- 10.9% of students attempted suicide one or more times during the past 12 months. By comparison, the national average was 8.5%.

Crisis/Emergency Hotlines

- [National Hopeline Network](#)
Links crisis centers certified by the American Association of Suicidology
1-800-SUICIDE (784-2433)
- [San Diego County 24 hour Crisis and Access Line](#) Crisis intervention; information and referral. **1-800-479-3339**
- [Friendship Line for the Elderly](#)
Support to depressed, isolated, and/or suicidal older adults. **1-800-971-0016**
- [The Trevor Helpline](#) The only national 24-hour, toll-free suicide prevention hot line aimed at gay and questioning youth. **1-800-850-8078**

Spotlight on a Local Organization

Yellow Ribbon Suicide Prevention Program

The Yellow Ribbon Suicide Prevention Program® (YRSP) began in September of 1994 after the suicide of 17-year-old Mike Emme. In the days following Mike's death, dozens of teenagers approached his family, asking what they could do. Mike's parents responded by saying, "Don't ever do this. Don't commit suicide. Reach out to someone and ask for help." Kids took notes. "It's okay to ask for help," they wrote, and it became the common theme. Thus, the Yellow Ribbon Card was born.

YRSP's main goal is prevention. They

also provide suicide-prevention gatekeeper training and post-prevention services. In association with teachers, counselors, and top suicide experts, YRSP has developed a simple, effective program that empowers children, youth, and adults to ask for help in times of crisis. It teaches how to respond to a crisis to help prevent suicide.

For more information contact:

Carol Skiljan, Executive Director
Light for Life of Southern California/Yellow Ribbon Suicide Prevention Program

(760) 635-5904

www.yellowribbonsd.org

UCSD Center Activities

The Children's Initiative: Results for Kids Project

The UCSD Academic Center of Excellence on Youth Violence Prevention is participating in The Children's Initiative **Results for Kids Project**, which is working to improve selected health indicators for children and families as reported in the *San Diego County Child and Family Health and Well-Being Report Card*. Over the next three years, various community stakeholders and policy leaders will be engaged in a results-based decision

making framework, investigating the story behind the data, conducting research about "what works", and program recommendations for sustainability and improvement.

Current project efforts are focused on exploring the increasing rates of youth suicide attempts in San Diego County. Results for the 2003 Youth Risk Behavior Survey conducted by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reveal that the percentage

of students who contemplated (19.4) and/or attempted (10.9) suicide in the last year was higher in San Diego compared to the United States (16.9 and 8.5, respectively) as a whole. *Note: San Diego data is collected through the San Diego Unified School District.*

This project is funded by The California Endowment.

For information contact:

Sandra McBrayer, CEO, The Children's Initiative (858) 581-5880

Research Literature

This section highlights current research to provide the latest insights and developments in the assessment, education, intervention and prevention of violence. Information on accessing the full text article is provided as available.

"Suicide attempts and physical fighting among high school students--United States, 2001." Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). *MMWR Morb Mortal Wkly* June 11, 2004, Rep 53(22): 474-6.

Violence is a major cause of morbidity and mortality, particularly among youths. In the United States, homicide and suicide are the second and third leading causes of death, respectively, for persons aged 13-19 years. Although suicide commonly is associated with anxiety, depression, and social withdrawal, research suggests a link between violent behaviors directed at oneself (i.e., suicidal behaviors) and violent behaviors directed at others among adolescents. Certain students who engage in extreme forms of violence, such as school shootings, exhibit suicidal ideation or behavior before or during the attack.

However, suicidal behavior also might be associated with involvement in less extreme forms of violent behaviors, such as physical fighting, which might be a risk factor for more severe forms of violence. To characterize any potential association between suicide attempts and fighting, CDC analyzed self-reported 2001 data from a nationally representative sample of high school students in the United States. The results of that analysis indicated that students who reported attempting suicide during the preceding 12 months were nearly four times more likely also to have reported fighting than those who reported not attempting suicide.

Prevention programs that seek to reduce both suicidal and violent behaviors are needed. Because prevalence of this association was determined to be highest in the 9th grade, these efforts might be most effective if implemented before students reach high school.

Full text article is available on:

<http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm5322a3.htm>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*

Web Resources

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report (MMWR). Current research and recommendations for suicide prevention and intervention.* <http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/index.html>
- Surgeon General's Call To Action To Prevent Suicide, 1999 <http://www.surgeongeneral.gov/library/calltoaction/default.htm>
- SAVE— Suicide Awareness Voices of Education™ *Facts, news, educational materials and resources on suicide.* www.save.org
- National Youth Violence Prevention Resource Center *Facts, news, information and resources on suicide.* <http://www.safeyouth.org>
- Community Health Improvement Partners (CHIP) *Report on Suicide in San Diego County, 1996-2001, statistics and local resources.* <http://www.sdchip.org>
- San Diego County Network of Care for Mental Health <http://sandiego.networkofcare.org/mh/home/index.cfm>

The mission of the UCSD Academic Center of Excellence on Youth Violence Prevention is to connect community assets with university resources to promote research and education on youth violence in San Diego

<http://www.sdhealth.org/youth>