

# SAN DIEGO COUNTY SUICIDE PREVENTION COUNCIL ANNUAL REPORT TO THE COMMUNITY 2016



## Staying the course

September  
2016

The San Diego County Suicide Prevention Council (SPC) provides the annual Report Card to share the most recent information about deaths by suicide and local suicide prevention efforts across the County. It is intended to bring awareness to the community and, ultimately, support all of us in reducing regional suicide rates. Through sharing this information we hope to reduce the stigma associated with suicide and mental illness and connect people with available resources.

This year's report is focused on populations that are at a higher risk for suicide: youth who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or questioning (LGBTQ+), Native Americans/Alaska Natives (NA/AN), and military service members and veterans. Our Suicide Prevention Action Plan's (SPAP) guiding framework mirrors the Institute for Medicine and the California Strategic Plan which call for selective strategies as part of the spectrum of interventions. Selective strategies are those that focus on at-risk groups whose members have a greater probability of becoming suicidal and aim to prevent the onset of suicidal behaviors among specific subpopulations.

Studies from organizations such as the Suicide Prevention Resource Center report that lesbian, gay, and bisexual youth are up to 7 times more likely to report having attempted suicide than their non-LGBTQ+ peers, while transgender youth are also believed to have higher rates of suicidal behavior. For NA/AN youth and young adults aged 10-34 years, suicide is the second leading cause of death and is on the rise. Research indicates that there are increasing suicide rates among veterans and service members. In 2010, suicide reached historic highs within the Army and Marine Corps.<sup>1</sup> The rate of suicides among veterans treated at the Veterans Affairs San Diego Healthcare System for fiscal year 2015 was 39.4 suicides per 100,000 population, which is similar than the most recent available national data of 40 suicides per 100,000. This likely reflects greater case-finding for veteran suicides in San Diego given the partnership between Veterans Affairs and the County Medical Examiner's Office.

## Highlights of 2015

- Suicide rate at 13.2, maintaining the decrease of 2014
- Calls to the Access & Crisis Line rose 1%, on top of the 15% increase in 2014
- Visits to the *It's Up to Us* suicide prevention & mental health media campaign website rose 57%
- QPR participation held steady for a third year at an annual average of 2000 trainees

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## Staying the Course

The data presented in the Report Card describe the overall status of suicide and results of key efforts to prevent it in San Diego County. While the U.S. and California struggle with rising suicide rates, our 2015 data reveal that the County is holding its ground on progress made last year. Compared to 2014, when the suicide rate declined for the first time in recent history, the suicide rate in 2015 held steady at 13.2 per 100,000 population. Gains in help-seeking among San Diegans are also staying the course. Crisis calls to the local Access & Crisis hotline rose 1% in 2015 on top of the 15% increase in 2014. Visits to the *It's Up to Us* suicide prevention and mental health media campaign website increased 57%. In addition, the number of trainees in the Question, Persuade, and Refer (QPR) suicide prevention program held steady for the third year at an annual average of 2000 participants. Although the rate of Emergency Department discharges due to non-fatal self-harm rose 12% between 2013 and 2014 (most recent data available), this may reflect an increase in help-seeking and timely intervention, factors that are critical to sustaining progress toward realizing the goal of zero suicides in San Diego.

Consistent with the County's *Live Well San Diego* vision for San Diego County residents, the *SPC Annual Report to the Community* addresses *Live Well San Diego's* Living Safely component and its Pursuing Policy and Environmental Change strategy by sharing news that will help us work together to achieve the collective vision of a protected, safe, and resilient San Diego community. To learn more about *Live Well San Diego*, visit [www.livewellsd.org](http://www.livewellsd.org).

# Status of Suicide & Suicide Prevention in San Diego County: 2016 Report Card

What do the data reveal about suicide? What is being done about it?

This Report Card brings together the most recent available data from multiple sources for the years 2011 through 2015 to present a profile of suicide in San Diego County. Information from the County Medical Examiner, the Access & Crisis Line, hospital emergency departments, students' self-reports, suicide prevention awareness campaigns and gatekeeper-training programs are presented to provide a more complete understanding of the status of suicide and efforts to prevent it in San Diego County.

Indicator	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
<b>1. Total Suicide Deaths</b>					
a. Number	392	413	441	420	427
b. Rate per 100,000 people	12.6	13.2	14.0	13.2	13.2
<b>2. Emergency Department (ED) Discharges: Self-Inflicted Injury/Poisoning</b>					
a. Number	2,511	2,788	2,870	3,263	-
b. Rate per 100,000 people	80.6	89.1	91.1	102.2	-
<b>3. Crisis Calls: Access &amp; Crisis Line</b>	13,450	15,834	17,635	20,267	20,485
<b>4. It's Up to Us Media Campaign</b>					
a. Website Visits	53,311	66,594	98,960	134,574	210,663
b. Facebook Fans	-	1,802	5,429	6,576	2,235
<b>5. Students: Seriously Considered Suicide</b>	-	20.0%	-	17.5%	-
<b>6. QPR Suicide Prevention Gatekeeper Training</b>					
a. Presentations	37	96	83	97	87
b. Participants	738	3,596	2,041	2,015	1,965

1) Total number and rate of persons that died by suicide. Source: County of San Diego HHS, Emergency Medical Services, Medical Examiner Database, 2011-2015. Population Data from SANDAG. 2) Total number, rates of persons discharged from emergency department that had self-inflicted harm from 2011-2014. Source: County of San Diego HHS, Emergency Medical Services, Medical Examiner Database, 2011-2014. Population Data from SANDAG. 3) Total number of self-reported crisis calls to the San Diego County Access & Crisis Line from 2011-2015. Source: OptumHealth. 4) Total number of persons that visited the It's Up to Us media campaign website and became a fan of the campaign Facebook page from 2011-2015. Website launched August 19, 2010 and Facebook page launched November 8, 2011. Source: Civilian Agency. 5) Total percent of youth (9th and 11th Grade) that had suicide ideation (surveys conducted every other year from 2011-2014). Source: California Health Kids Survey (CHKS), Developed by WestEd for the California Department of Education, 2011-2014. The total percent is an average of the 9th and 11th grade percentages. 6) Total number of Question, Persuade, and Refer (QPR) trainings held, people trained for suicide prevention conducted in San Diego County through Suicide Prevention Council. Source: Community Health Improvement Partners, 2011-2015.

Call the San Diego Access & Crisis Line (ACL) at (888) 724-7240 to receive FREE assistance 7 days a week/24 hours a day. For mental health and suicide prevention resources, information about free suicide prevention trainings, or to use chat services with ACL Monday-Friday (4pm-10pm), visit [www.Up2SD.org](http://www.Up2SD.org). For more information on the San Diego County Suicide Prevention Council visit [www.spcsandiego.org](http://www.spcsandiego.org).

## SAVING MILITARY + VETERANS LIVES FROM SUICIDE

If you are a **veteran**, an **active duty/reserve and guard** or you **care about one** who is in emotional crisis, you can call the free and confidential Veterans Crisis Line at **1-800-273-8255** and **Press 1**, **chat online**, or send a text message to **838255** to connect with a caring, qualified VA responder who can deal with any immediate crisis

The good news: most people with military service never consider suicide. Among those few whose lives do spiral down towards darkness and despair, the vast majority never take that irrevocable step. The bad news: the number of military and veteran suicides is rising, and experts fear it will continue to rise despite aggressive suicide prevention campaigns by the government and private organizations. <sup>ii</sup> Veterans Affairs (VA) is committed to reducing veteran suicide and offers a network of support for all veterans and their families and friends. Each VA Medical Center has a Suicide Prevention Coordinator or team to offer veterans the services they need. Suicide Prevention Coordinators and VA partners continually engage veterans and communities to raise awareness about VA's suicide prevention and behavioral health resources.



VA San Diego has a team of three social workers exclusively dedicated to suicide prevention. During fiscal year 2015, the team received 523 consults from other VA San Diego providers and responded to 971 calls to the Veterans Crisis Line. The suicide rate among those treated at VA San Diego during fiscal year 2015 was 39.4 per 100,000, which is comparable to the most recent national data (40 per 100,000). The most common mental health problems among veterans who died by suicide in fiscal year 2015 included depression (38%), addiction (30%), bipolar disorder (23%) and PTSD (15%). However, most veterans who died by suicide had never accessed VA mental health treatment.

## COMMUNITY IS THE HEALER THAT BREAKS THE SILENCE

### A CLOSER LOOK AT NATIVE AMERICANS

Indian Health Council, Inc. (IHC) is one of the four Native American clinics in San Diego County with a Prevention and Early Intervention (PEI) program. The goal of the program is to connect culture and wellness, prevent suicide, and to break the stigma placed on mental health problems, enhancing the Native American population's access to mental health services. Suicide is the second-leading cause of death for Native American/Alaska Native youth aged 15 to 24 years. San Diego County is home to 18 Reservations (the largest number for any county in the US) and a large Native American urban population. Many of the presentations and events that the IHC PEI team host focus on community and culture as prevention methods.



To recognize National Suicide Prevention week in September 2015, IHC hosted a series of events to raise awareness and bring the community together to break the stigma. The week consisted of a "Life is Sacred Walk", a Question, Persuade, and Refer (QPR) Suicide Prevention training, "Check Your Mood" screenings at the clinic, and a "Skate for Life" event at the Pala Skate Park. At this event some of the world's top professional skateboarders came out to give positive messages to the community about hope and perseverance. Based on the amazing success of these events, IHC plans to host more events during the month of September 2016 that the public can attend to recognize National Suicide Prevention Week. For more information on these events and other IHC resources for Native Americans, please visit <http://www.indianhealth.com>

## LET'S PREVENT SUICIDES IN OUR LGBTQ+ COMMUNITY

\*According to the Suicide Prevention Resource Center, LGBTQ+ youth are up to 7 times more likely to have attempted suicide as their LGBTQ+ peers who reported no or low levels of family rejection.

\*Research has found the presence of gay-straight alliances (GSAs) in schools is associated with decreased suicide attempts; in a study of LGBTQ+ youth aged 13-22, 16.9% of youth who attended schools with GSAs attempted suicide compared to 33.1% of students who attended schools without them.

Spero Arts Foundation, focuses on helping the LGBTQ+ youth of San Diego County who have or have had thoughts of suicide find hope through the expressive arts. Spero's main program, Club Spero provides free arts-based therapeutic services to transition age youth, primarily of the LGBTQ+ community. Spero takes every opportunity to go out into the community and interact with youth groups and, more recently, adult groups that are interested in learning more about expressive arts and suicide prevention.

Club Spero forms a safe, creative community in which young people are able to express themselves and share their unique creativity without stigma or shame and helps them form a network of support with others like them, while having fun through the arts. The battle each person endures, the pain, the stories, can all seem very similar from afar. However, the truth is that every struggle that leads someone to consider suicide only to live to tell the tale is unique. Being able to express the complex emotions of those difficult transitional years through the arts helps reduce the feelings of isolation and despair that can lead to depression and thoughts of suicide. That's why membership is the most important aspect of Club Spero. It offers more than just an arts program. Club Spero is a community-building organization based as much upon relationships between members as it is upon creating art with the assistance of professionals. These relationships formed through working together in the arts, are authentic and empathetic, leading to a system of natural supports that extends outside the walls of the studio and into the community where much of the risk lies. Club Spero is a place to belong and a place to grow, a place where being "different" is celebrated and encouraged. To learn more about Spero Arts Foundation please, visit <http://www.speroartsfoundation.org/>

## WE CAN SAVE LIVES: THIS IS HOW

Suicide is largely preventable. Unlike other health issues, tools are available to help reduce the number of lives lost by suicide. Together, we as a community can take action to address this problem. To save lives, we must continue to develop and support interventions that are effective and work in an integrative manner.

In 2010, the County of San Diego established a vision called *Live Well San Diego*. This vision fosters a future where San Diegans are able to build better health, live safely and thrive in daily activities. The County facilitates collaborations across schools, businesses, non-profit agencies and many other organizations. Within its scope, the vision offers residents in San Diego additional opportunities to support suicide prevention efforts.



Together we can save lives. Anyone in the county can participate by requesting resources to reduce the stigma around mental health in the *It's Up To Us* media campaign, participating in Mental Health First Aid and Question Persuade and Refer trainings. If someone you know is showing signs of depression, you can help to coordinate depression screenings called "Check Your Mood," and requesting behavioral health materials to share with your communities. While the solutions are complex, tools are available and we can reduce the number of suicides in our community. Together, we can improve this problem, and increase the health, safety and well-being of the 3.3 million residents in our community. For resources to share, visit [www.up2sd.org](http://www.up2sd.org) and [www.namisaniego.org](http://www.namisaniego.org).

Local Efforts

SPC SUBCOMMITTEES

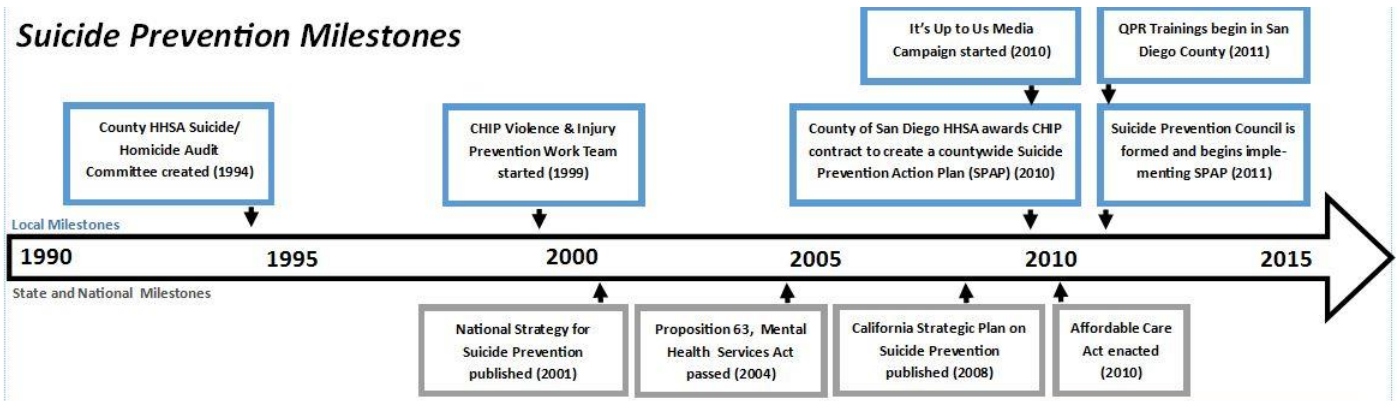
- ◆ Assessment + Evaluation
- ◆ Faith Organization Outreach
- ◆ Help Line Collaborative
- ◆ Higher Education
- ◆ Media
- ◆ School (K-12) Collaborative
- ◆ Training + Education

## The San Diego County Suicide Prevention Council (SPC)

The SPC is a community-wide collaborative focused on realizing a vision of zero suicides in San Diego County. Our mission is to prevent suicide and its devastating consequences in San Diego County.

On April 1, 2010, the County of San Diego Health and Human Services Agency (HHS) awarded Community Health Improvement Partners (CHIP) a contract to form and establish an interagency council to create, introduce, and drive implementation of a Suicide Prevention Action Plan (SPAP) for San Diego County, the first of its kind in California. Today, with continued support from the County of San Diego, the council provides oversight, guidance, and collective support to implement the recommendations of the SPAP. **For more information on the plan or to join SPC, visit [www.spcsandiego.org](http://www.spcsandiego.org)**

### Suicide Prevention Milestones



### Here's What You Can Do:

- ❖ Volunteer your time and/or donate to a suicide prevention organization
- ❖ Participate with SPC [www.spcsandiego.org](http://www.spcsandiego.org)
- ❖ Host or attend a QPR Suicide Prevention Gatekeeper Training
- ❖ Take a Mental Health First Aid training [www.mhasd.org](http://www.mhasd.org)
- ❖ Visit the *It's Up to Us* website [www.up2SD.org](http://www.up2SD.org)
- ❖ Become a Facebook Fan of *It's Up to Us* [www.facebook.com/up2sd](http://www.facebook.com/up2sd)
- ❖ Share this information and talk to your family and friends about suicide and mental health. You, too, can help reduce stigma.
- ❖ Check-out [www.livewellsd.org](http://www.livewellsd.org) to see how you can join the *Live Well San Diego* efforts in your region

<sup>i</sup> Three High-Risk Populations Targeted for National Suicide Prevention Efforts. December 30, 2010, 08:00 ET from The National Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention. <http://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/three-high-risk-populations-targeted-for-national-suicide-prevention-efforts-112656084.html>

<sup>ii</sup> Military And Veteran Suicides Rise Despite Aggressive Prevention Efforts. 08/29/2013 03:48pm ET—Updated Sep 03, 2013. [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/08/29/military-veteran-suicides-prevention\\_n\\_3791325.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/08/29/military-veteran-suicides-prevention_n_3791325.html)