

Suicide Prevention Month Communication Toolkit

September is Suicide Prevention Month. This document outlines the key themes, takeaways, and messages that any Washington State agency or partner organization can use to raise awareness of resources and help available to those who are struggling.

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Principles of this toolkit

- Any Washington State agency or partner organization is free to use some or all elements of this plan to promote suicide prevention month.
- Messaging should promote a positive narrative, avoid negative or unsafe language/imagery
- Messaging should point to state and national resources
- Messaging should leverage the work of existing campaigns ([#BeThe1To](#), [#BeThere](#), and [Take 5 to Save Lives](#)) that focus on the importance of being there for others.

Goals of this toolkit

- Ensure coordinated messaging for Suicide Prevention Month
- Promote help-seeking
- People understand and recognize warning signs
- Provide resources to build coping skills and resiliency
- Be inclusive

Key messages

- If you are immediately concerned about yourself or a friend, text Crisis Text Line at 741741 or call the Lifeline at 1-800-273-TALK (8255). These services are free, confidential and available in the USA 24/7.
- Everyone struggles at times, but if a problem is lasting too long, is too intense or feels like more than you can handle, reach out for help.
- It's important to learn the warning signs of suicide, self-harm and substance abuse.
- Look for big changes in behavior and personality, or a dramatic shift in emotional expression (very teary, laughing even when things aren't funny, etc.)
- It's ok to ask for help – it doesn't mean that you're weak, or just want attention. Everyone needs help from time to time, and if you or a friend is struggling, you should reach out to talk to someone right away.
- Trust your gut – if you're worried about yourself or a friend, don't hesitate to take action and get help. You don't have to know what is wrong-just that they're in trouble or struggling.
- If you have a mental health provider, don't hesitate to reach out.
- You don't have to be a professional to help. Learn how by watching the "Saves Lives Suicide Prevention Training for Parents/Caregivers" training [online](#).
- Be direct with your friends – tell them you're worried and why, ask them how they're feeling and offer to reach out to a professional and/or family member with them or for them.
- It is ok to ask someone directly if they've been feeling like they want to hurt themselves or thinking about suicide.
- If you feel you are currently experiencing a mental health crisis, please call 911 or go directly to your nearest emergency department.

Social media: Messages and themes

This year, organizations are using the hashtags #SPM20 and #BeThere to track social media engagement. Below is a list of sample messages and themes.

September 10: World Suicide Prevention Day

Today is World Suicide Prevention Day. It's a time to remember those affected by suicide, to raise awareness, and to focus efforts on directing treatment to those who need it most. #SPM20 #BeThere

Theme: Know the Signs

Everyone can learn what to do to save a life from suicide. Know the signs, find the words, and reach out. #SPM20 #BeThere <https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/help-someone-else/>

Talking about wanting to die is a potential warning sign for people who are thinking about suicide. Learn how to respond and what to do. #SPM20 #BeThere <https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/help-someone-else/>

Pain isn't always obvious. That's why we need to know the warnings signs for suicide. Encourage your friends and family to get educated about suicide prevention. #SPM20 #BeThere <https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/help-someone-else/>

Sometimes anger and anxiety can be a sign of stress or mental illness. Know the signs. #SPM20 #BeThere <https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/help-someone-else/>

Substance abuse is one way some try to mask mental illness or thoughts of suicide. Know the signs. #SPM20 #BeThere <https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/help-someone-else/>

Do you know the warning signs for suicide? #SPM20 #BeThere <https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/help-someone-else/>

Theme: Find the words / Be the one to...

Learn to ask the question "Are you thinking about suicide?" and other steps to saving a life. #SPM20 #BeThere at <http://bit.ly/S9CbFp>

If someone tells you that they are thinking about suicide, take action immediately and don't leave them by themselves. Get help. Ask them when the last time they thought about it was and if they have a plan. Then get them to help right away. #SPM20 #BeThere [#BeThe1To](http://bit.ly/S9CbFp) Learn more at <http://bit.ly/S9CbFp>

Trust your instincts – if you are concerned about someone, don't hesitate to speak up, or ask them directly about it. #SPM20 #BeThere [#BeThe1To https://www.suicideispreventable.org/](https://www.suicideispreventable.org/)

Make a call today to someone you are concerned about. If you need help finding the words, visit <http://bit.ly/S9CbFp> #SPM20 #BeThere [#BeThe1To https://www.suicideispreventable.org/](https://www.suicideispreventable.org/)

Sometimes we know people need help, but don't know how to start the conversation. Find the words at <http://bit.ly/S9CbFp> #SPM20 #BeThere [#BeThe1To](http://bit.ly/S9CbFp)

If you're worried that someone in your life may be suicidal, you can use the Lifeline's [5 steps to help someone that may be in suicidal crisis](#) #SPM20 #BeThere [#BeThe1To](http://bit.ly/S9CbFp)

Theme: Reach out

Did you know crisis lines are there for helpers too? If you are concerned about a loved one and don't know what to do, they can help. Call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at (800) 273-8255. #SPM20 #BeThere

If you've lost someone to suicide, you are not alone. Find a survivors' group in your area at <http://bit.ly/S9CbFp> #SPM20 #BeThere

Together we have the power to make a difference. The power to save a life. <http://bit.ly/11C6ad7> #SPM20 #BeThere

Concerned about someone? Visit www.suicideispreventable.org for resources in your county. #SPM20 #BeThere

You don't have to be in crisis to call a hotline. Sometimes you just need to talk. If you need help or need to talk call (800) 273-8255. #SPM20 #BeThere

Are you going through tough times? Trained and experienced counselors are available 24/7 to help you. Make the FREE call to the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: (800) 273-8255. #SPM20 #BeThere
Theme: Connect
Make your voice count. Engage in dialog about suicide prevention at www.yourvoicecounts.org #SPM20 #BeThere
Did you know you can increase short-term feelings of happiness by performing random acts of kindness? Here are 276 for you to choose from bit.ly/11qqAp #SPM20 #BeThere
If you are worried about someone on social media, you can contact safety teams, who will reach out to connect the user with the help they need. https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/help-someone-else/safety-and-support-on-social-media/ #SPM20 #BeThere
Be an ally to people with mental health conditions. Get tested for stigma at CureStigma.org #CureStigma #SPM20 #BeThere
Give a voice to a struggle that millions of people face every day. Submit your mental health video, picture or story. You are not alone. https://notalone.nami.org/ #CureStigma #SPM20 #BeThere
Theme: Mental & emotional well-being
Connect with loved ones and others who may be experiencing stress about the outbreak. Talk about your feelings and enjoy conversation unrelated to the outbreak. #SPM20 #BeThere
Coping tip: Stay active. Make sure to get enough sleep and rest. Stay hydrated and avoid excessive amounts of caffeine or alcohol. Eat healthy foods whenever possible. #SPM20 #BeThere
Coronavirus coping tip: Set a limit on media consumption, including social media, local or national news. #SPM20 #BeThere
LGBTQ+
The Trevor Support Center is a place where LGBTQ+ youth and their allies can find answers and explore resources on topics like coming out, healthy relationships, homelessness and mental health. https://www.thetrevorproject.org/resources/trevor-support-center/ #SPM20 #BeThere
The LGBTQ+ community is diverse and strong, but may be disproportionately at-risk for suicidal feelings. Check out stories of hope and recovery to learn how LGBTQ+ people have coped during hard times. https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/help-yourself/lgbtq/ #SPM20 #BeThere
Be an active part of your LGBTQ+ loved ones' support systems. If they show any warning signs for suicide, be direct. Tell them it's OK to talk about suicidal feelings. Practice active listening techniques and let them talk without judgment. #SPM20 #BeThere
Strong family bonds, safe schools and support from caring adults can all protect LGBTQ youth from depression and suicidality https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/help-yourself/lgbtq/ #SPM20 #BeThere #BeThe1To
Have a step-by-step plan ready for if/when you feel depressed, suicidal, or in crisis, so you can start at step one and continue through the steps until you feel safe. https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/help-yourself/ #SPM20 #BeThere
Veterans
Talk to other veterans who have gone through the same kind of trauma that you have. https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/help-yourself/veterans/ #SPM20 #BeThere
Is there a veteran or service member in your life? Check in with them. If a they show any warning signs for suicide, be direct. Tell them it's OK to talk about suicidal feelings. Practice active listening techniques and let them talk without judgment. #SPM20 #BeThere
A simple act of kindness to the veteran in your life can help them feel less alone. If they show any warning signs for suicide, be direct. Tell them it's OK to talk about suicidal feelings. #SPM20 #BeThere #BeThe1To

<p>Not all wounds from war can be seen. Make connections with stories from veterans. http://bit.ly/12H3TwM. #SPM20 #BeThere</p>
<p>Don't be afraid to let your friends know what you need when they ask; they want to help. You can also reach out to confidential 24/7 services like the Veterans Crisis Line. #SPM20 #BeThere</p>
<p>American Indian / Alaska Native</p>
<p>Join We R Native in supporting National Suicide Prevention Month. Spread the word that suicide CAN BE PREVENTED. To get help or give help, call 1-800-273-TALK (8255) or text START to 741741 to chat via text. #SPM20 #BeThere</p>
<p>Depression and suicide affect people of all ages and populations, but Native American and Alaskan Native populations can be at a higher risk. If you're struggling, the Lifeline is available to help, 24/7. https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/help-yourself/native-americans/ #SPM20 #BeThere</p>
<p>By paying attention to warning signs and connecting with family, friends and our culture, we may be able to prevent a death. https://www.wernative.org/my-life/my-mind/suicide #SPM20 #BeThere</p>
<p>If your friend has mentioned suicide, tell someone who can help. Check out the When your friend is talking about suicide fact sheet for more info. #SPM20 #BeThere #BeThe1To</p>
<p>Silence isn't strength. Don't keep suicidal feelings to yourself. Lean on your support network, find a therapist or a support group, or get in touch with the Lifeline. #SPM20 #BeThere</p>
<p>Youth and parents</p>
<p>Don't forget. You matter. https://www.activeminds.org/about-mental-health/be-there/coronavirus/ #SPM20 #BeThere</p>
<p>Sometimes your struggle can be underestimated because of your age. But we hear you, and help is available. https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/help-yourself/youth/ #SPM20 #BeThere</p>
<p>Talking with young people about suicide won't put the idea in their heads. If you see warning signs, be caring and seek help. #SPM20 #BeThere</p>
<p>Is your gut telling you to be worried that your child has withdrawn, become more worried or on edge, seem unusually angry, or just doesn't seem like themselves? Seek help now. https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/ #SPM20 #BeThere #BeThe1To</p>
<p>Love and friendship are all about respect. Toxic or unhealthy relationships can negatively affect you. Whether you're dating or building new friendships, remember your rights. If you're being bullied, help is also available. #SPM20 #BeThere</p>
<p>Suicide is preventable, and you don't have to be a professional to help. Learn how by watching the "Saves Lives Suicide Prevention Training for Parents/Caregivers" training online. #BeThere #BeThe1To</p>
<p>A fight or breakup might not seem like a big deal, but for a young person it can feel immense. Sympathize and listen. Minimizing what your child or friend is going through can increase his or her sense of hopelessness. https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/help-yourself/youth/ #SPM20 #BeThere</p>
<p>COVID</p>
<p>One of the best things you can do to support kids and teens is to be available on their timeframe. Be a good listener and give them extra time to process their feelings. https://coronavirus.wa.gov/sites/default/files/2020-05/COVID-19-SupportingKidsandTeens.pdf #SPM20 #BeThere</p>
<p>Staying home does not have to mean being lonely. Stay connected, keep in touch with friends and family, and be kind to yourself. https://coronavirus.wa.gov/sites/default/files/2020-05/COVID-19-Staying-home.pdf #SPM20 #BeThere</p>
<p>It is normal that you or your loved ones might feel anxious, sad, scared or angry. You are not alone. It is okay to seek out and ask for help. The resources here are a good place to start.</p>

https://coronavirus.wa.gov/information-for/you-and-your-family/mental-and-emotional-well-being #SPM20 #BeThere
If you are experiencing excess stress due to COVID-19 call Washington Listens at 833-681-0211 for support and resources. #SPM20 #BeThere
Washington Listens is available to anyone experiencing emotional distress related to COVID-19. Call 833-681-0211 to talk with someone. #SPM20 #BeThere
Feeling anxious, overwhelmed or powerless is common during an infectious disease outbreak like COVID-19. It's more important than ever to know the warning signs for suicide. https://coronavirus.wa.gov/sites/default/files/2020-05/COVID-19-SuicideWarningSigns.pdf #SPM20 #BeThere
Deaf and hard of hearing
If you are hard of hearing, you can chat with a Suicide Prevention Lifeline counselor online or for TTY, dial 800-799-4889. https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/help-yourself/for-deaf-hard-of-hearing/ #SPM20 #BeThere

Assets & resources

- [National Alliance on Mental Illness \(NAMI\)](#)
 - Images and graphics: <https://www.nami.org/Get-Involved/Awareness-Events/Awareness-Resources>
- [Suicide Prevention Lifeline](#)
- [Coronavirus.wa.gov Mental & Emotional Wellness page](#)
- Department of Health Suicide Prevention page
- [Coronavirus.wa.gov infographics](#) (includes mental health messages)
 - [Spanish](#)
 - [Russian](#)
 - [Simplified Chinese](#)
 - [Vietnamese](#)
- [Suicide Prevention Resource Center](#)
- [American Foundation for Suicide Prevention](#)
- [Washington Listens](#)
- [Indian Health Service Suicide Prevention](#)

Sample Press Release

[Organization] recognizes September as Suicide Prevention Month

In observance of Suicide Prevention Month, **[Organization]** encourages Washingtonians to #BeThere — to help prevent suicide. Being there by being present, supportive and strong for those who may be going through a difficult time.

“Suicide is preventable, and you don’t need special training to prevent it.” said **[Organization Representative]**. “Everyone can play a role by learning to recognize the warning signs, showing compassion, and offering support.”

Listed are actions anyone can take to be there:

- Reach out to loved ones to show them you care. Check in through a text and simply ask, “How are you?”
- Learn the warning signs of suicide at <https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/help-someone-else/>.
- It is ok to ask someone directly if they’ve been feeling like they want to hurt themselves or thinking about suicide.
- Watch the “Saves Lives Suicide Prevention Training for Parents/Caregivers” training [online](#).

Look for the hashtags #BeThere and #SPM20 this month on [\[Organization\]’s](#) social media pages.

People in crisis or having thoughts of suicide, and those who know someone in crisis, should call the Suicide Prevention Lifeline at (800) 273-8255 or chat online at suicidepreventionlifeline.org. Confidential support is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year.

Learn more about [\[Organization\]’s](#) suicide prevention efforts at [\[website\]](#).