

Public Health Response to a Suicide Contagion

S
t
a
r
k

C
o
u
n
t
y



Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

Maureen E. Ahmann D.O.
Medical Director
Stark County Health Department
ahmannm@starkhealth.org

S
t
a
r
k

C
o
u
n
t
y



Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.



- 1 Introduction, Background
- 2 Strategy- Community Plan
- 3 Challenges Forward- Epi-Aid
- 4 Recommendations- Community Collaboration



Child Fatality Review Board

S
t
a
r
k

C
o
u
n
t
y



Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

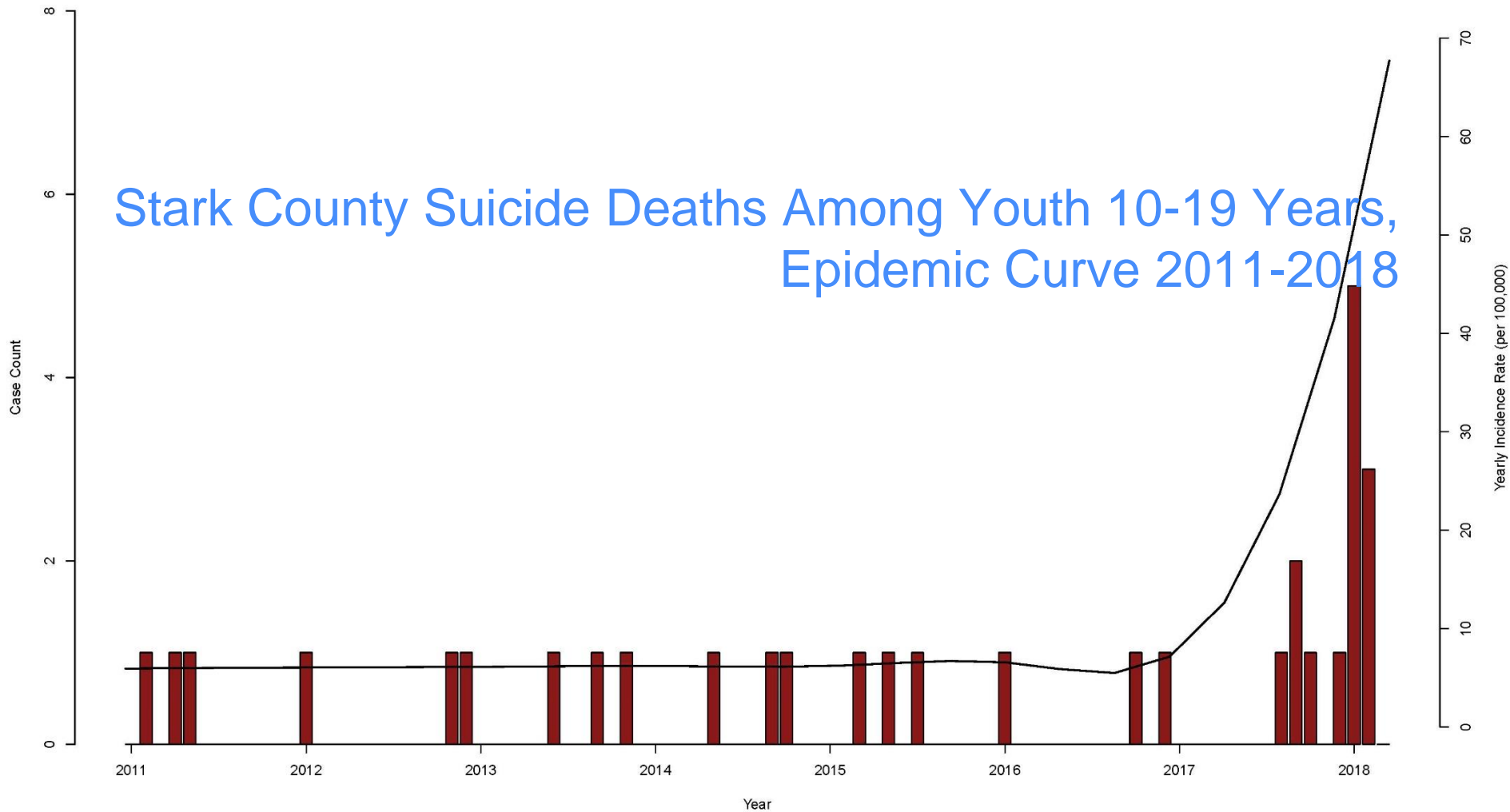
Between August 2017 and March 2018, the community of Stark County, Ohio experienced 12 suicides among middle and high school students. During this timeframe, the suicide rate among youth aged 10–19 years rose to more than 7 times the U.S. national rate and 11 times the 2011–2016 Stark County rate.



Introduction



Stark County Suicide Deaths Among Youth 10-19 Years, Epidemic Curve 2011-2018

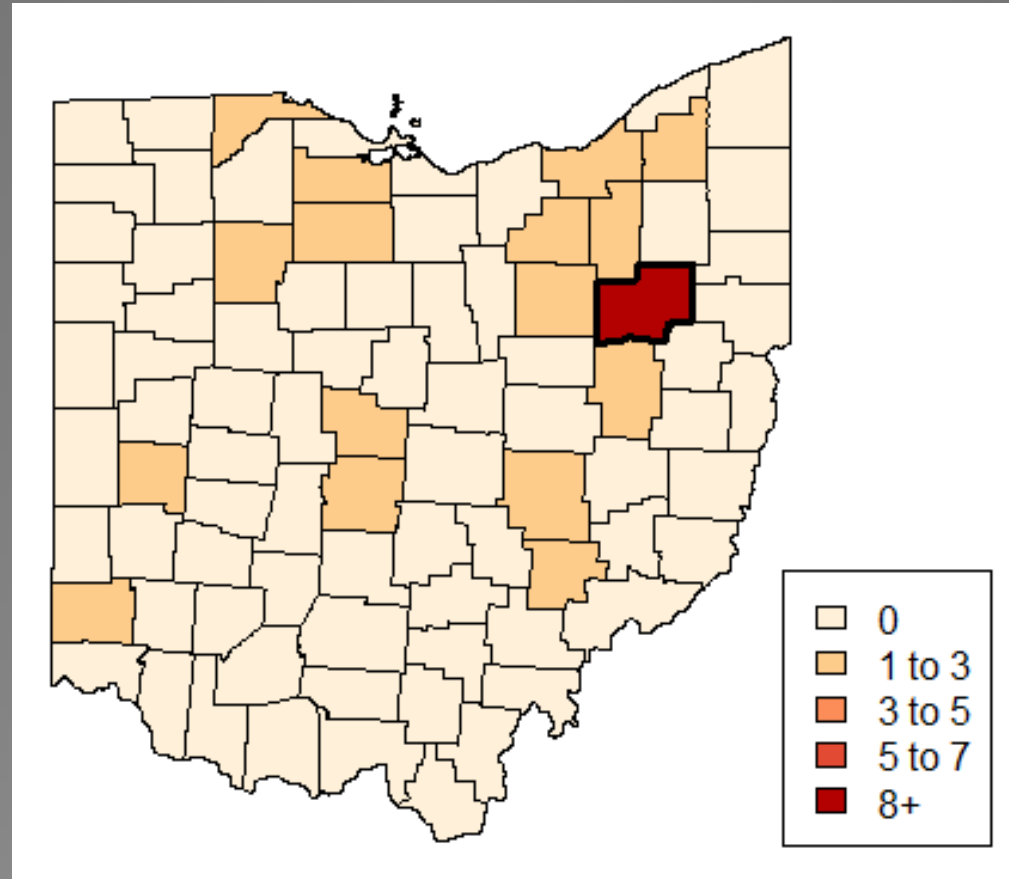


Introduction



Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

Number of Suicides among youth aged 10-19 years, 2018 Q1



- Suicide cluster
- Suicide contagion
- Public health issue
- Preventable



Background



Suicide is a serious and growing public health problem. Between 2000 and 2016, suicide rates increased by 36% in Ohio and 30% across the United States (Stone et al., 2018). Nationally, suicide is the second leading cause of death for people 10 to 34 years of age (CDC WISQARS, 2018).



Background



Center for Disease Control

MMWR 37 (S-6);1-12

08/19/1988



Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

- Develop own response before onset of suicide cluster
- Should involve all concerned sectors of community
- “Coordinating Committee”
- Community resources should be identified
- Identifies a “Host Agency”
 - “Houses” plan
 - Monitors suicide incidence
 - Calls meetings of CC



Community Plan



- When a suicide cluster occurs in a community

- When one or more deaths from trauma occur in the community

- Especially among adolescents
 - May potentially influence others to attempt or complete suicide

S
t
a
r
k

C
o
u
n
t
y



Response Plan



Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

- Contact and prepare key groups
- Conduct response in a manner that avoids glorification of suicide victims and minimizes sensationalism
- Identify high risk persons and refer for services
- Provide a timely flow of accurate, appropriate information to media
- Identify and change elements in environment that increase suicide risk
- Address long term issues



Response Plan



Being prepared is key

CDC Recommendations for a Community Plan for the Prevention and Containment of Suicide Clusters



The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) "Recommendations for a Community Plan for the Prevention and Containment of Suicide Clusters."

- These recommendations are a conceptual framework for communities to develop their own suicide-cluster-response plans, adapted to the particular needs, resources, and cultural characteristics of their communities.



Strategy



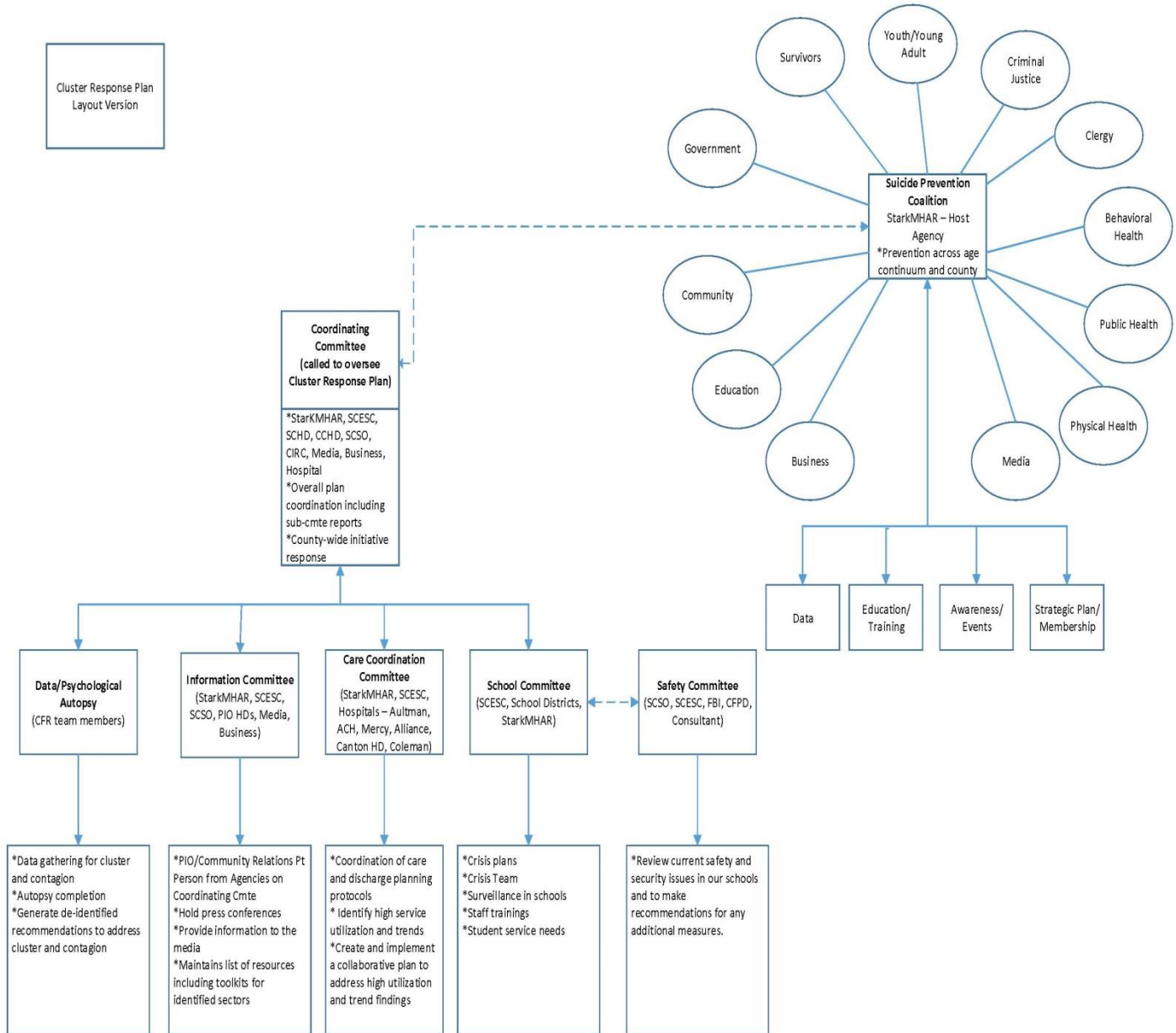
Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

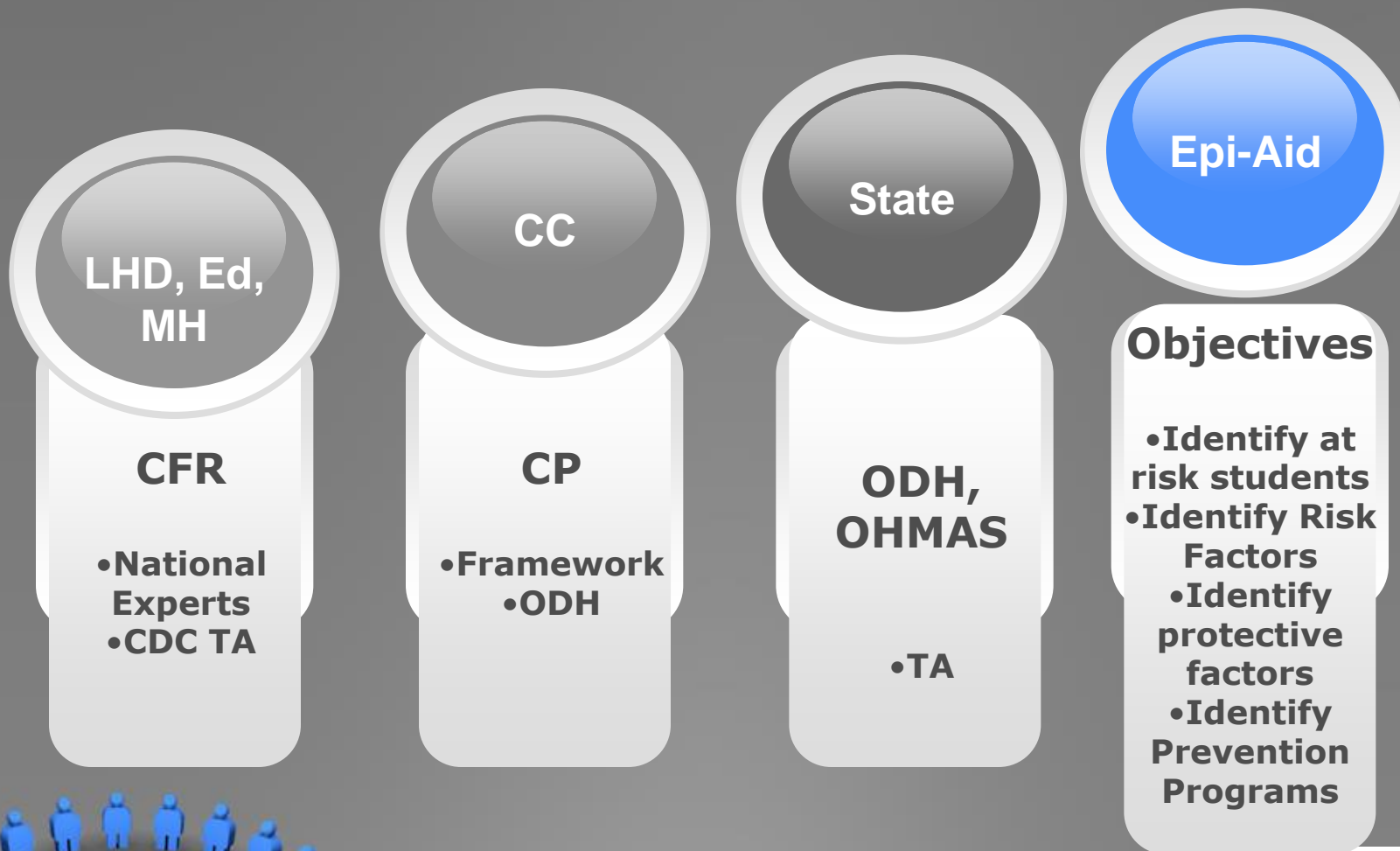


Strategy



Cluster Response Plan
Layout Version





Challenges Forward



Epi-Aid Objectives

S
t
a
r
k

C
o
u
n
t
y



Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

Objective 1:

Rapidly determine the population in need of prevention services at all affected and at-risk middle- and high-schools in Stark County through a comprehensive school-based risk screen.



Challenges Forward



Objective 1: Methods

S
t
a
r
k

C
o
u
n
t
y

NOYHS

NORTHEAST OHIO YOUTH HEALTH SURVEY



Challenges Forward



Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

NOYHS

- Collaboration among CDC, ODH, SCHD, and other local partners
- Student survey electronically distributed to 7th-12th graders at local participating school districts (17 total)
- Students were asked a variety of questions on topics related to mental health and suicidality, including:
 - **Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)**
 - **Past and current suicide risk**
 - **Substance abuse**
 - **Social media usage**
 - **Connectedness and resilience**
- Data collection began in April while the Epi-Aid team was in Stark County and continued throughout May
- MH professionals were present at each school on the day of survey administration



Challenges Forward



Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

Objective 1: Anticipated Results

- Who is at highest risk of worsening mental health/suicidality in a suicide cluster?
- What schools/school districts in Stark County are at the highest risk for experiencing a suicide attempt/suicide?
- How long does suicide contagion last?
- What type of student is most at risk for suicidal behavior?
- How are suicidal behaviors spread in social networks? Does it differ by type of behavior-death, attempt, ideation?



Challenges Forward



Objective 2:

Identify precipitating factors for youth suicide that may contribute to ongoing suicidal behaviors among Stark County youth population to prevent further suicide attempts and suicides.



Challenges Forward



Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

Objective 2: Methods

- School-based survey (NOYHS)
- Ohio EpiCenter data
 - **Chief complaint and triage notes searched for suicide-related terms**
- Ohio Hospital data
 - **Records pulled based on ICD-9 and ICD-10 codes**
- Media scan
 - **Google search for “Stark County+Suicide” during cluster time period**
 - Frequency/type/content of media reporting rated based on safe reporting guidelines developed by CDC/WHO and tailored for this investigation



Challenges Forward



Objective 2: Anticipated Results

- What are the risk factors for fatal and non-fatal suicidal behaviors in Stark County's cluster?
- How does an adolescent's knowledge of peer suicide influence their risk of suicidal behavior?
- What exposures are most dangerous in a cluster setting?
- What proportion of suicide contagion is attributable to media reporting?



Challenges Forward



Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

Is Suicide Contagious?

S
t
a
r
k

C
o
u
n
t
y



Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

Impact of Media



There is a dose-response relationship between the quantity of reporting on suicide and subsequent suicide rates



- Manner in which a suicide is reported can be a factor in suicide contagion
 - **Dramatic headlines**
 - **Repetitive reporting**
 - **Specifics of suicide**



Impact of Exposure to a Suicidal Peer

S
t
a
r
k

C
o
u
n
t
y



Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

“teens who know friends or family members who have attempted suicide are about three times more likely to attempt suicide than are teens who do not know someone who attempted suicide”
(Cutler et al, 2001)



Objective 3:

Ascertain the activities, social supports, and other factors among the Stark County youth population that are most protective against suicide risk in order to guide immediate prevention activities



Challenges Forward



Objective 3: Methods

- Protective factors were assessed using the NOYHS
- Protective factors assessed included:
 - **Participation in sports & extracurricular activities**
 - **Connectedness with respect to school, friends, and family**
 - **Resilience**
 - **Hope for the future**
- The effect of protective factors on suicide risk will be included in the final report



Challenges Forward



Objective 3: Anticipated Results

- What are the significant protective factors against suicidal behavior in the context of this cluster?
- What protective factors are most beneficial, and therefore most important to implement?



Challenges Forward



Objective 4:

Inventory and catalogue existing suicide prevention initiatives in Stark County and make recommendations on evidence-based suicide prevention programs.



Challenges Forward



Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

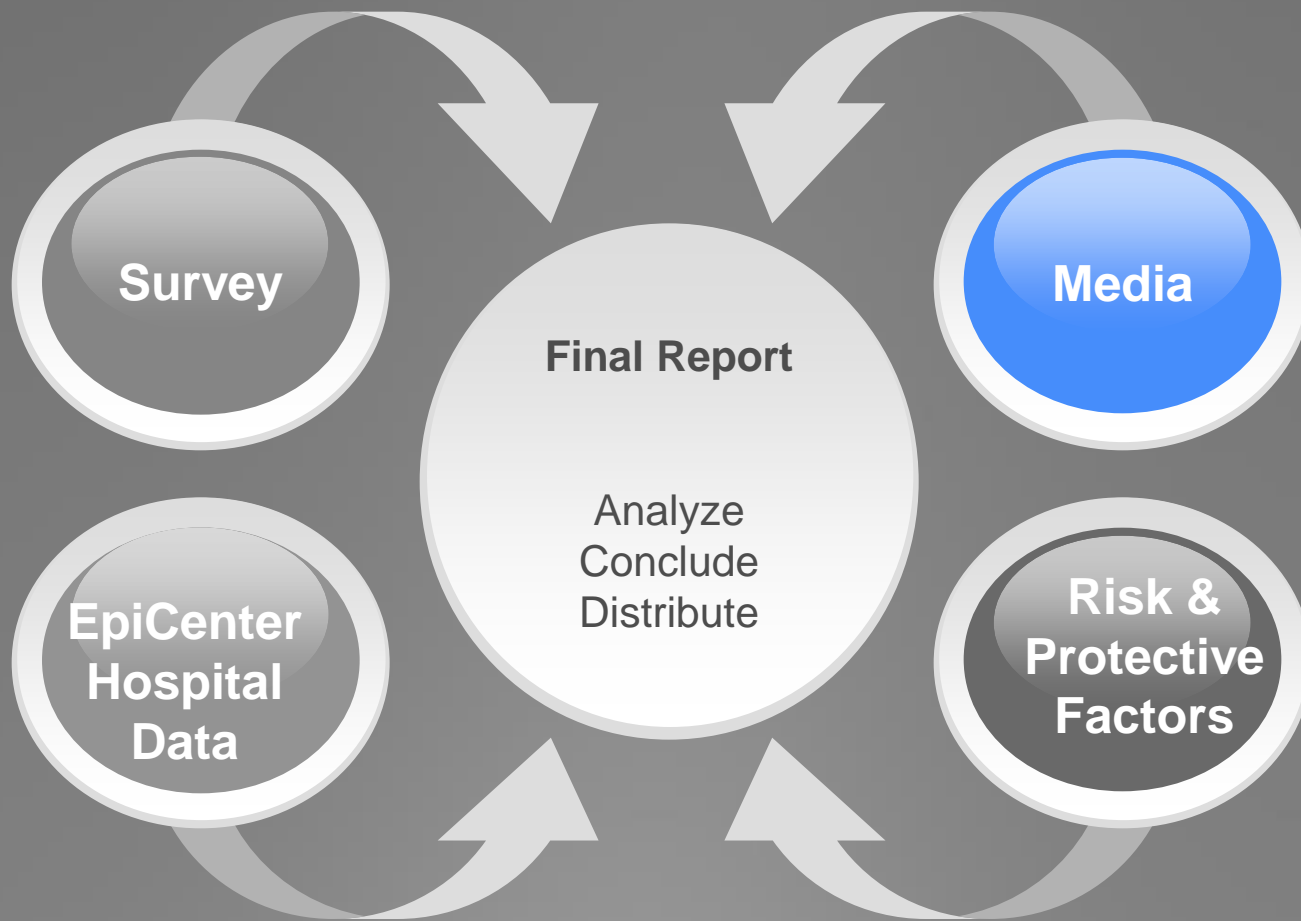
Objective 4: Results

N	Agency	Program, policy, activity	Type	Strategy	Approach
6		Counseling on Access to Lethal Means	Activity/program	At_risk	Gatekeeper training
7		Counseling on Access to Lethal Means	Activity/program	Environments	Reduce access to lethal means among persons at risk of su
8		Mental Health First Aid Trainings	Activity/program	At_risk	Gatekeeper training
9		Crisis Intervention Team Trainings	Activity/program	At_risk	Gatekeeper training
10		Crisis Intervention Team Trainings	Activity/program	Environments	Organizational policies and culture
11		Survivors' Walk	Activity/program	Connectedness	Community engagement activities
12		Suicide Prevention Coalition	Activity/program	Connectedness	Community engagement activities
13		Crisis Text Line	Activity/program	At_risk	Crisis intervention
14		Crisis Hotline	Activity/program	At_risk	Crisis intervention
15		Columbia Suicide Severity Rating Scale Trainings	Activity/program	At_risk	Gatekeeper training
16		Post-vention training, Lifelines	Activity/program	At_risk	Gatekeeper training
17		Post-vention training, Lifelines	Activity/program	Environments	Organizational policies and culture
18		Media Communications	Activity/program	Prevention	Safe reporting and messaging about suicide
19		Online Mental Health Screenings	Activity/program	At_risk	Treatment for people at risk of suicide
20		Teacher trainings	Activity/program	At_risk	Gatekeeper training
21		Teacher trainings	Activity/program	Environments	Organizational policies and culture
22		Care teams	Activity/program	Prevention	Post-vention
23		SOS	Activity/program	At_risk	Gatekeeper training
24		SOS	Activity/program	Environments	Organizational policies and culture
25		CAST/Reconnecting Youth	Activity/program	Coping	Social-emotional learning programs
26		Jason Foundation	Activity/program	At_risk	Gatekeeper training
27		Behavioral Health Navigator (Zero suicide academy)	Activity/program	Access	Safer suicide care through systems change
28		The Grace Initiative	Activity/program	Connectedness	Peer norm programs
29		The Grace Initiative	Activity/program	Coping	Parenting skills and family relationship programs
30		Behavioral Health	Activity/program	At_risk	Crisis intervention
31		Behavioral Health	Activity/program	Economic	Housing and stabilization policies
32		Community Health Improvement Plan - suicide reduction	Policy		



Recommendations





Challenges Forward



NOYHS

NORTHEAST OHIO YOUTH HEALTH SURVEY

Interim Recommendations from the Northeast
Ohio Youth Health Survey, Spring 2018

PRELIMINARY

S
t
a
r
k

C
o
u
n
t
y



Recommendations



Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

Interim Recommendations

Preliminary Recommended Suicide Prevention Strategies	2
Strategy 1: Develop a protocol to help students at risk of suicide	2
Strategy 2: Develop a protocol to respond safely to a suicide death	3
Strategy 3: Identify students who are at risk of suicide.....	4
Strategy 4: Integrate suicide awareness & prevention into curriculum for staff, students, and families	6
Strategy 5: Enhance protective factors	7
Supplemental Information on Screening.....	10
Definitions	13
Abbreviations	14
Additional Resources	15
References.....	17



Recommendations



- Ideally, every school will implement two suicide prevention strategies
 - **Protocols for helping students at risk of suicide**
 - **Protocols for responding to a suicide death to prevent additional suicides**



Recommendations



NOYHS

NORTHEAST OHIO YOUTH HEALTH SURVEY

STARK COUNTY

Preliminary Findings from the 2018 Northeast
Ohio Youth Health Survey

County Level
Data Report

S
t
a
r
k

C
o
u
n
t
y



Recommendations



Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

Preliminary Findings and Opportunities for Prevention

Preliminary Findings and Opportunities for Prevention.....	54
Strengthen Access and Delivery of Suicide Care	54
Create Protective Environments	54
Promote Connectedness	55
Teach Coping and Problem-Solving Skills	56
Identify and Support People at Risk	56
Lessen Harms and Prevent Future Risk	57



Recommendations



Committees

- Data/Psychological Autopsy – CFR
- Information Committee
- Care Coordination Committee – hospitals extremely important
- School committee
- Safety committee
 - Meet weekly for several months
 - Currently meeting 1 to 2 times per month



Challenges Forward



Next Steps

- Conclude survey 👍
- Analyze survey data 👍
- Distribute Interim Recommendations 👍
- Distribute District-level data 👍
- Distribute County-level data* 👍
 - **Network analysis** 🖐️
- Analyze EpiCenter/hospital data
- Modeling risk/protective factors
- Analyze media scan



Recommendations



Collaboration



S
t
a
r
k

C
o
u
n
t
y



Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

Provided updates/progress to other key groups

- Suicide Prevention Coalition
- Foundations
- Chamber of Commerce
- Service Clubs
- Hospitals
- Churches
- Family Council
- Schools



Challenges Forward



Inform and Educate Community Stakeholders

- Engaged national experts
- Two-day training/disseminated information
 - **Internal meetings**
 - **Key stakeholder meeting – businesses, schools, health departments, law enforcement**
- Met individually with front-line agencies
- Met with individual school impacted
- Met/provided training for all county school districts



Challenges Forward



Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.



Challenges Forward

- CDC's [Preventing Suicide: A Technical Package of Policy, Program, and Practices](#)
- SAMHSA [Preventing Suicide: A Toolkit for High Schools](#)



Resources



Thank You!

S
t
a
r
k

C
o
u
n
t
y



Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.