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**Optum**

# **Suicide Prevention**

Pennsylvania Employees Benefit Trust  
Fund





# Welcome

Neil Weaver  
Secretary of Administration



# Learning points



- 1 Raise awareness of suicide warning signs
- 2 Discuss intervention strategies to encourage someone who may be at risk to seek help
- 3 Identify facts and dispel myths about suicide
- 4 Discuss risk and protective factors for suicide
- 5 Identify resources for yourself and others



# Prevalence of Suicide

## Key global data

**700,000**

people globally die by suicide each year

**77%**

occur in low- and middle-income countries

**12.3 million**

American adults seriously thought about suicide

**15-29-year-olds**

suicide is the 4<sup>th</sup> leading cause of death



**Men are more than 3 times more likely to take their own lives than women**

## Key data in Pennsylvania

**1,800**

people died by suicide in 2021 – an increase of 13% over 2020

**68%**

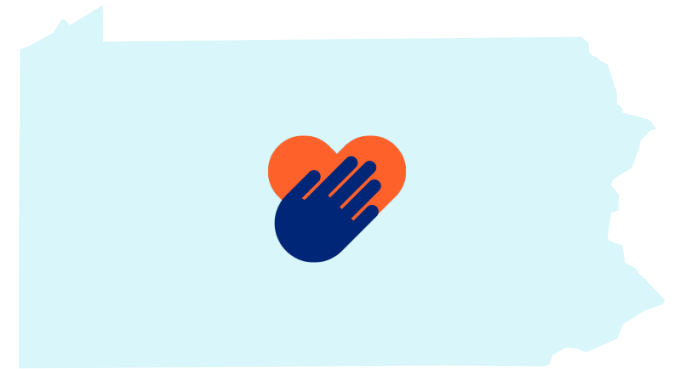
of deaths by suicide in PA are from the 19 urban counties

**522,000**

PA adults experience serious thoughts about suicide

**15-29-year-olds**

suicide is the 3<sup>rd</sup> leading cause of death in PA



*\*These data were provided by the Pennsylvania Department of Health. The Department specifically disclaims responsibility for any analyses, interpretations, or conclusions.*

# Myths vs. facts

## Myth

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Only people with a mental health condition are affected by suicide.



Not only people with mental illness are affected by suicide. Some people with no history of mental illness may experience complex stressors, a life event, or countless other factors that lead them to take their own life.

Once someone has had thoughts of suicide or planned or attempted it, they will always be suicidal.



Evidence has shown that thoughts of suicide or attempts **DO NOT** increase the likelihood that one will always feel suicidal.



# Myths vs. facts

## Myth

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Suicide happens without warning.

Those who die by suicide have taken the “easy way out” and are selfish.

Talking about suicide will encourage it.



## Fact

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Suicide is preventable and there are often warning signs.

In most cases, those who die by suicide want to end their suffering because they are feeling deeply hopeless and helpless.

Talking about suicide can reduce its stigma and allow those suffering to share their feelings and seek help.

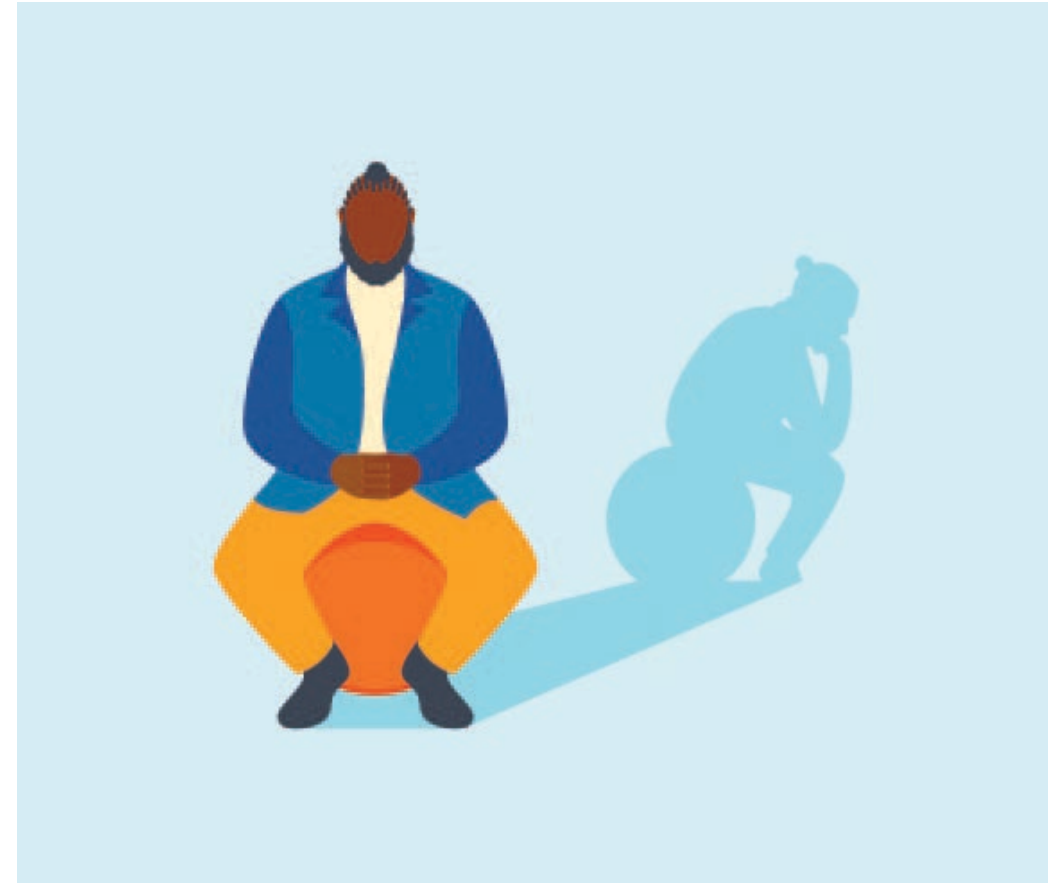


# Risk Factors for Suicide

# Common risk factors

## Individual

- Previous suicide attempt
- History of mental illness
- Serious physical illness such as chronic pain
- Criminal/legal problems
- Job/financial problems or loss
- Substance use
- Sense of hopelessness
- Violence, victimization and/or trauma
- Stress and anxiety



# Common risk factors

## Relationship

- Bullying
- Family/loved one's history of suicide
- Loss of relationships
- High conflict or violent relationships
- Social isolation



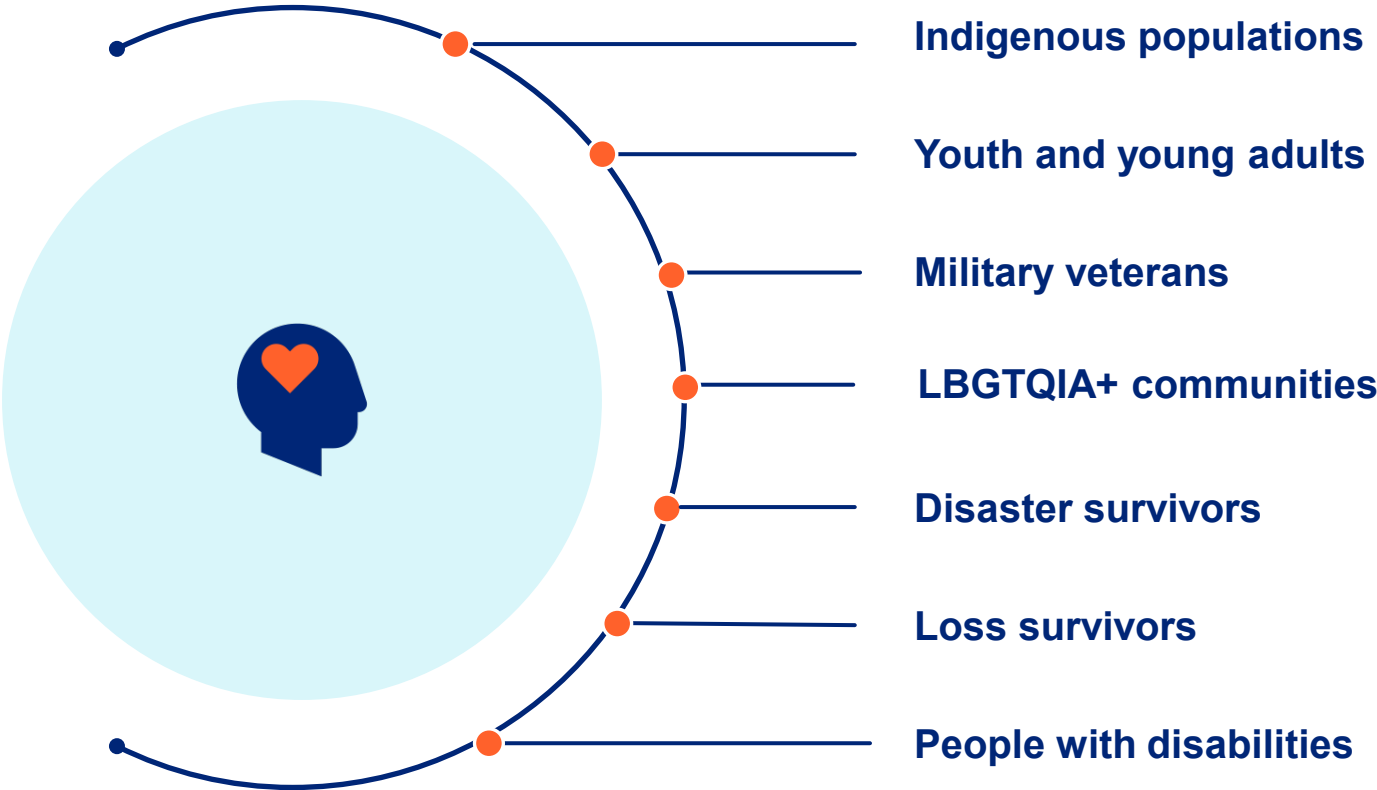
# Common risk factors

## Community

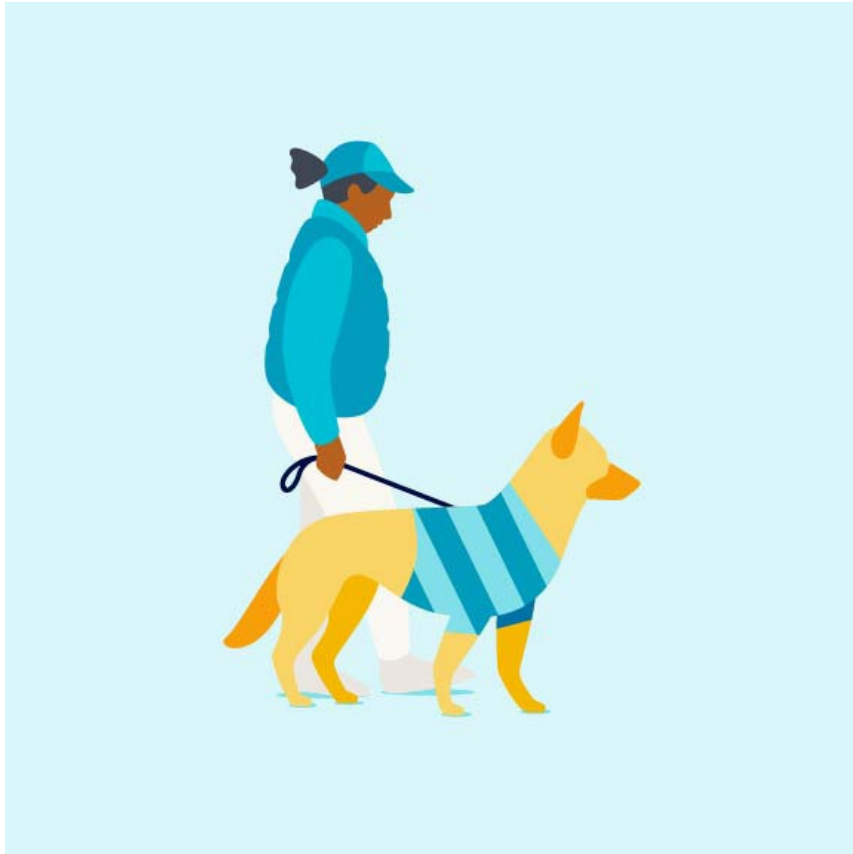
- Lack of access to healthcare
- Community violence
- Discrimination
- Stigma associated with seeking help in the past
- Easy access to lethal means of suicide among those at risk
- Stress of acculturation



# Groups at higher risk



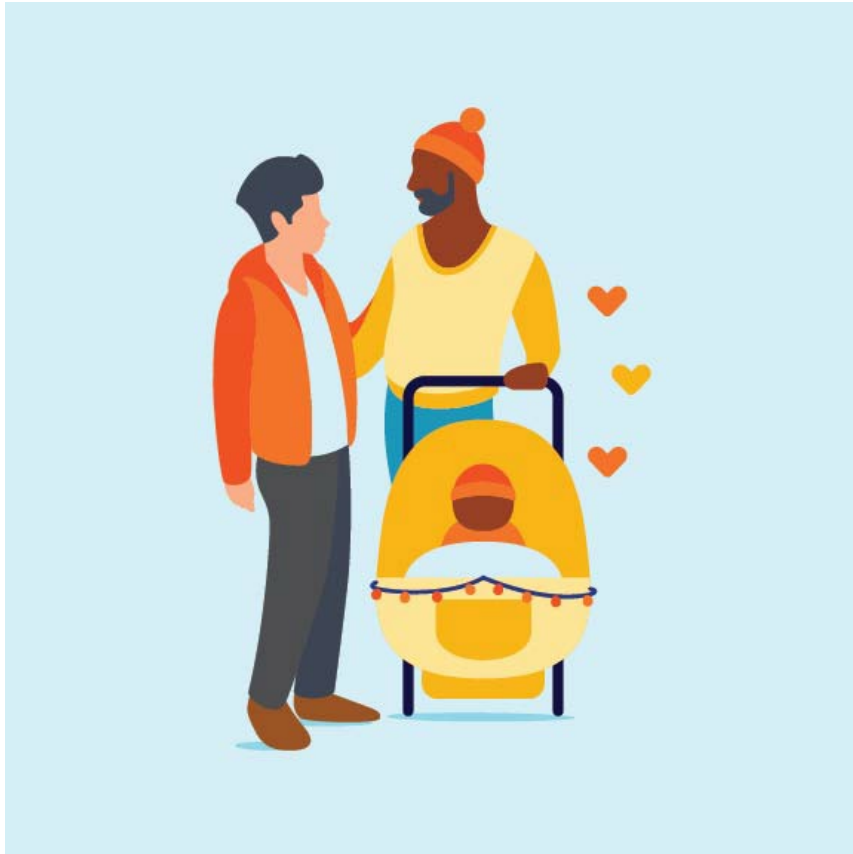
# Protective factors



## Individual

- Effective coping and problem-solving skills
- Strong sense of cultural identity
- Good health and access to mental and physical health care
- Being proactive about mental health
- Reasons for living (family, friends, pets, etc.)
- Healthy fear of risky behaviors

# Protective factors



## Relationship

- Feeling connected to others
- Being a parent or having a supportive partner
- Support from friends and family
- Professional relationships that are open and supportive



# Protective factors



## Community

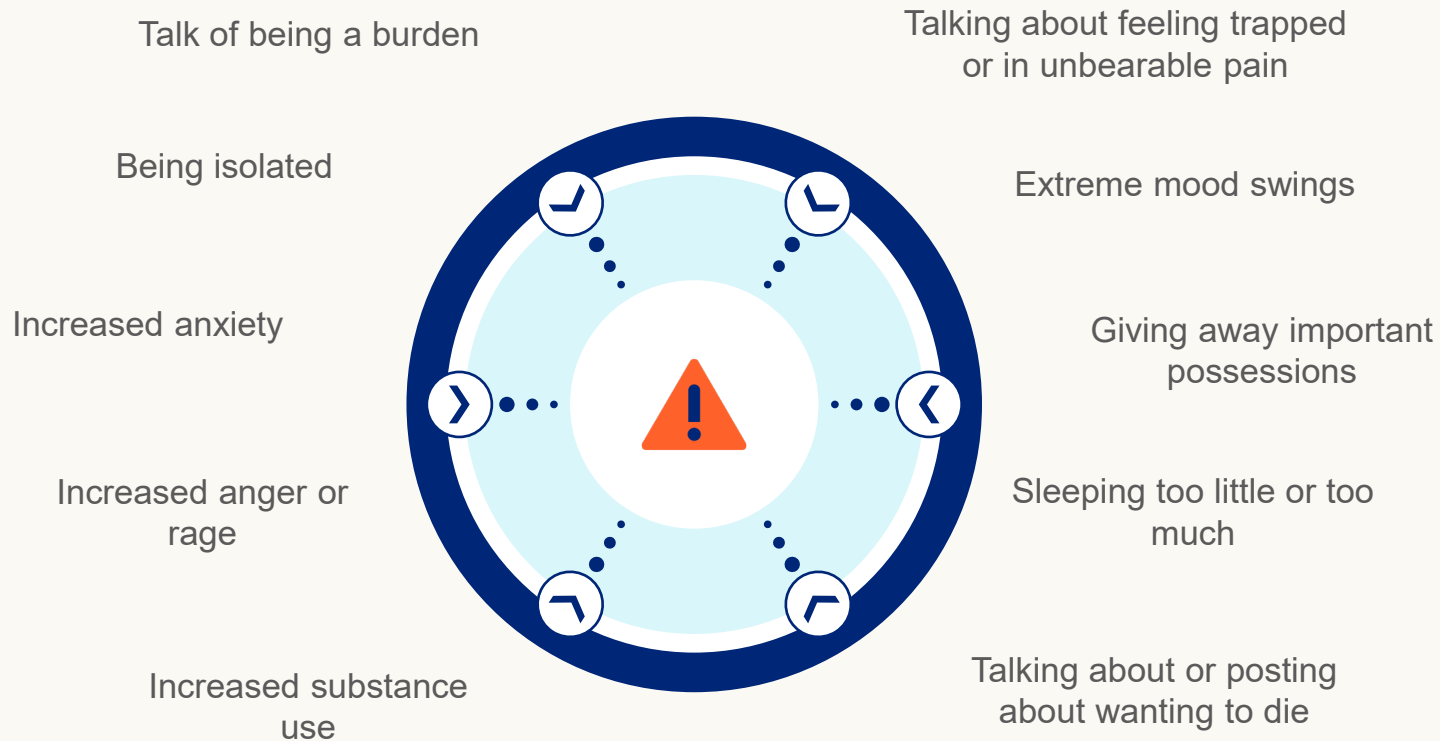
- Availability of consistent and high quality physical and behavioral health care
- Feeling connected to school and other social institutions
- Cultural, religious, or moral objections to suicide
- Limited access to lethal means
- Groups and activities that provide mental health support



# Warning Signs

# Warning signs

If someone is at risk for suicide, these can be some of the warning signs.



“Most people who take their lives exhibit one or more warning signs, either through what they say or what they do.”

*American Foundation for Suicide Prevention<sup>6</sup>*



# How to Intervene

## What you can do

**If you or someone you know have thoughts about suicide or are in crisis, seek help right away. Call the Suicide and Crisis Lifeline at 988 for assistance.**



***\*If you or someone you know is in immediate danger, call 911 — or go to the closest emergency room.***

## Additional intervention strategies



Let people know you're willing to talk about mental health



Encourage someone suffering to seek help and access professional support



Trust your instincts



If you are helping someone who is contemplating suicide, it is important to protect your mental health and well-being. Consider seeking support for yourself.

# Self-care and coping strategies



## Talk about it

Don't be afraid to speak openly about how you are feeling. Simply talking about mental illness can make you feel better. However, before starting any conversation, consider what both the positive and negative outcomes of the conversation can be.



## Develop positive relationships

Like building a professional network for your career, cultivating personal relationships in both personal and professional settings can make seeking help easier.



## Consult a health professional

A health care professional can help you determine your risk and recommend therapies and medical interventions that are best for you.

# Self-care and coping strategies



## Recognize your warning signs

Do you see any of the warning signs in others in yourself? Try your best to look inward and identify what your signs and triggers are.



## Create a personal “safety plan”

Ask for help to secure dangerous items or means that can lead to tragic consequences.



## Set boundaries

Be clear with people and share with them when you want advice and when you want them just to listen.



# Building resilience

## Mind

- Have a daily routine
- Set goals each day
- Make a gratitude list
- Take breaks
- Practice mindfulness
- Express your feelings



## Body

- Walk, exercise
- Set a sleep routine
- Take deep, slow breaths
- Eat a healthy diet
- Limit caffeine and alcohol intake
- Take a bath or shower

# Building resilience

## Soul

- Ask for help
- Tell someone you love them
- Reach out to someone who may need you
- Connect with whatever inspires you



## Surroundings

- Create a retreat space
- Display something you like to look at
- Join a virtual gathering
- Watch your favorite movie or show

# Employee Assistance Program (EAP)



Free counselling and support for all employees and eligible family members.



Easily accessible, voluntary and confidential in accordance with the law.



A service that can provide support for personal or work-related issues.



Staffed by experienced professionals.

**Contact the State Employee Assistance Program (SEAP) at 800-692-7459**

*“This program should not be used for emergency or urgent care needs. In an emergency, call the phone number of the local emergency services, or go to the nearest accident and emergency department. This program is not a substitute for a doctor’s or professional’s care. Due to the potential for a conflict of interest, legal consultation will not be provided on issues that may involve legal action against Optum or its affiliates, or any entity via which the caller is receiving these services directly (e.g. employer). This program and its components may not be available in all locations or for all group sizes and is subject to change. Coverage exclusions and limitations may apply.”*

# Suicide Prevention Resources

**Jana Marie Foundation:** <http://www.janamariefoundation.org/> - Provides youth focused mental wellness resources, programs, and trainings for youth, parents, and educators.

**Aavidum:** <http://aavidum.com> - With the slogan “I’ve got your back,” Aavidum provides resources, materials, and support around mental wellness clubs and mental wellness programs in schools.

**Prevent Suicide PA:** <http://preventsuicidepa.org/> - A statewide suicide prevention organization with the mission to support those who are affected by suicide, provide education, awareness, and understanding.

**Pennsylvania Network for Student Assistance Services (PNSAS):** <http://pnsas.org/> - The mission of PNSAS is to provide leadership for developing a safe and drug-free environment and mental health wellness in schools and communities across the commonwealth.

**Services for Teens at Risk (STAR) Center:** [www.starcenter.pitt.edu](http://www.starcenter.pitt.edu) - Provides a variety of suicide prevention program for youth that provides clinical and outreach services.

# Suicide Prevention Resources

**PA Department of Human Services 988 implementation:** <https://www.dhs.pa.gov/Services/Mental-Health-In-PA/Pages/988.aspx> and **988 website:** <https://988lifeline.org/> - 988 is a national suicide prevention number used to access trained crisis counselors. In PA there are call centers available 24/7 to answer 988 calls and provide phone-based support and connections to local resources.

**PA Department of Agriculture Mental Wellness Resources for the Agricultural Community:** <https://www.agrisafe.org/courses/invest-in-your-health/> - Works with AgriSafe to provide AgriStress, a 24/7 crisis and resource line for agricultural workers and industries that support agriculture, with staff who are trained in working specifically with the farming community.

**PA Department of Military and Veterans Affairs – PA VETConnect:** <https://www.dmva.pa.gov/Veterans/SpecialInitiatives/Pages/SuicidePrevention.aspx> - The objectives of PA VetConnect are to determine the needs of veterans and their beneficiaries, find resources that meet those needs, and connect veterans with those resources.

**Suicide Prevention Alliance:** <https://www.suicidepreventionalliance.org/> - This organization's mission is to support those who are having thoughts of suicide, those who have been impacted by suicide, and to collaborate with the community and its leaders by increasing awareness, reducing stigma, and providing data-driven education and techniques to prevent suicide.

“

**“It’s so much darker when a light goes out  
than it would have been if it had never  
shone.”**

**John Steinbeck**  
American author

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