

Madison County Recognizes Suicide Prevention Awareness Month

by Submitted by Madison County Administrator's Office
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EDWARDSVILLE — Many of us know someone or heard of someone who died by suicide. We ask ourselves when it happens what could we have done to recognize the symptoms in order to prevent the tragedy.



“It’s heartbreaking that an individual feels like there is no hope other than to take their own life,” Deborah Humphrey, director of the Madison County Mental Health Board, said.

Humphrey said that September is National Suicide Prevention Awareness Month and the Mental Health Board would like to see the trend in suicide rates in the county diminish.

Since Jan. 1, there have been 25 individuals who've taken their own lives in Madison County. The Madison County Coroners Office reports that through the end of August there were 13 who took their life by gunshot, eight by hanging, two by overdose and two by a sharp instrument.

For all those who do take their own life, there are millions more who have serious thoughts of suicide and go as far to make a plan or attempt it.

So, how do you recognize the signs of suicide risk?

“There’s no single cause for suicide,” Humphrey said. “But educating people of some of the signs can assist in getting those in distress the help they need.”

Suicide most often occurs when stressors and health issues converge to create an experience of hopelessness and despair.

Warning Signs for Suicide

- Painful feelings of depression, guilt, or shame
- Feelings of hopelessness, despair, or inability to escape an unbearable problem
- Intense feelings of anxiety or feeling overwhelmed
- Preoccupation with death, feelings of worthlessness, or being a burden to others
- Preparing for death, such as preparing a will or getting other affairs in order, giving away possessions, acquiring lethal means to harm oneself (e.g., buying a firearm, stockpiling pills or medications, internet searches for ways to die)
- A significant change in behavior, including withdrawal from friends/family, inability to function, decreased self-care.

Additional Risk Factors

- Increased drinking or substance use
- A history of previous suicidal behavior or attempts
- A history of diagnosed depression, PTSD, alcohol-use disorder, or other mental health condition
- Social factors: relationship loss, social isolation, being bullied

Suicide is a major public health concern and a leading cause of death in the U.S. and a concern in Madison County.

Madison County’s suicide rates range from 31 to 50 suicides annually since 2019. The current data suggests that 2023 will be on trend with years past.

Madison County Trends in Suicide Deaths

Year Number of Suicides

2019 50

2020 31

2021 43

2022 44

2023 25 (January through August)

Humphrey said the Mental Health Board will aim to raise awareness during Suicide Prevention Awareness Month by sharing resources to help others recognize the warning signs for suicide and know how to get help.

“The goals will be to raise awareness, help individuals educate themselves, and encourage everyone to look out for others,” she said.

The Mental Health Board planned various suicide prevention activities for the month to include media messaging, training and education, and encouraging attendance in a suicide loss event occurring in the Metro East.

Suicide Prevention activities will kick-off on Sept. 8, with a major concentration of activities taking place during Suicide Prevention Week — Sept. 10 to 16. The suicide prevention activities will aim to reduce the stigma surrounding suicide and encourage the pursuit of mental health assistance.

“The message that we want to share is mental health needs to be normalized and going to therapy should be looked at just like health prevention such as going to the dentist or other practitioner,” Humphrey said.

The Suicide Prevention Month will offer several free events Madison County wide.

Throughout the month the Mental Health Board will make daily Facebook posts sharing suicide prevention information and how to connect with ourselves, our loved ones, with community, and connecting to hope and healing. Visit the Mental Health Board Facebook page at

<https://www.facebook.com/co.madison.il.us> to find out more

On Sept. 8, the Mental Health Board will host the IMPACT Conference that will include an array of sessions. One session is targeted for parents, school faculty and staff members, community partners, mental health providers and other adults with a regular interaction with youth. Another session will be a resource panel with local experts in suicide mental health, substance use, prevention resources.

Visit <https://www.impactsuicide.net> to register for the event.

On Sept. 13, Madison County is invited to attend the St. Clair County Suicide Prevention Alliance QPR question, Persuade and Refer, Suicide Prevention Training at the Shrine of Our Lady of the Snows at the Conference Center followed by a Suicide Loss Vigil at the Snows Grotto.

“Recognizing the signs and symptoms of someone experiencing mental distress and knowing how to offer assistance can potentially make a significant difference in their life,” Humphrey said