

Medical College: Report shows 40% increase in Wisconsin suicide rate since 2000, offers plan to reduce deaths

Posted on Friday, Sep 11, 2020

>> **WisPolitics is now on the State Affairs network. Get custom keyword notifications, bill tracking and all WisPolitics content. [Get the app or access via desktop.](#)**

Milwaukee, Sept. 11, 2020 - A recently published report by the Wisconsin Department of Health Services, Mental Health America of Wisconsin and the Comprehensive Injury Center (CIC) at the Medical College of Wisconsin (MCW), "[Suicide in Wisconsin: Impact and Response](#)," summarizes the burden of suicide in the state and offers a comprehensive approach to reduce suicide attempts and deaths.

The report shows Wisconsin's suicide rate rose 40 percent between 2000 and 2017. From 2013 to 2017, suicide rates were highest among individuals ages 45-54. In that same time period, suicide rates were higher in rural counties than urban/suburban counties. Men, the researchers found, are more likely to die by suicide than women, while women are more likely to be hospitalized with self-harm injuries than men. In 2019, 850 Wisconsin residents died by suicide.

The report then presents the Wisconsin Suicide Prevention Plan, a comprehensive approach to reduce suicide attempts and deaths consisting of strategies to increase and enhance protective factors, increase access to care for at-risk populations, implement best practices for prevention in healthcare systems and improve surveillance of suicide and evaluation of prevention programs.

Many factors can increase the risk of suicidal thoughts and behaviors, including mental health and substance use issues, financial difficulties, physical illness, social

isolation, childhood and historical trauma and access to the methods used in suicide attempts.

“These risks can be decreased and suicide can be prevented through comprehensive efforts that make use of data in conjunction with evidence-based and best practices for prevention, while also reflecting the needs and cultures of our local communities,” said Sara Kohlbeck, MPH, Assistant Director of the CIC and one of the lead epidemiologists on the report. “With the report’s in-depth data, we hope stakeholders will gain insight about the people and populations in Wisconsin who experience self-harm injuries, as well as suicidal thoughts, behaviors, deaths and associated risk factors.”

The [Wisconsin State Assembly Speaker’s Task Force on Suicide Prevention](#) undertook this issue in 2019, and now “Suicide in Wisconsin: Impact and Response” provides further context for suicide prevention and highlights the importance of aligning services, prevention programs and policies.