

## Suicide in Rural Tennessee

Tennesseans living in rural areas can face a much higher risk of suicide-related behavior, including attempting and dying by suicide. However, suicide is preventable.

Rural risk factors include:

- Living in an isolated location, which may reduce one's sense of connectedness;
- Difficulty obtaining mental and behavioral health services due to high cost, lack of transportation, and other distance-related issues;
- Access to and familiarity with lethal means;
- Socioeconomic factors, such as unemployment and being in persistent poverty;
- Sociocultural factors that increase mental illness stigma and prevent help-seeking, including a culture of stoicism (particularly for males).

Health and behavioral health facilities that serve rural residents can support patients to lead a full life.

Being educated about the warning signs and understanding how to support patients from rural areas are powerful tools for suicide prevention.



## Learn Suicide Safe Care

- ENGAGE & ASSIST those with suicidal desire/intent
- ASSESS a patient's suicide risk
- DEVELOP a collaborative safety plan
- MANAGE suicidal thoughts & behaviors
- TREAT suicidal desire and/or intent
- GAIN support & supervision needed to engage & assist

## Join the Zero Suicide Initiative

The Zero Suicide Initiative aims to improve care and outcomes for individuals at risk for suicide in health and behavioral health care systems. Organizations who adopt the Zero Suicide framework are committing to:

- embed evidence-based interventions focused on reducing suicide into care such as training, screening and referral;
- collect data to measure both outcomes as well as fidelity of these interventions;
- conduct continuous quality improvement to educate staff and improve performance weaknesses;
- normalize suicide prevention and care practices for staff, people at risk, and their families as the expected standard of care.

For more information, please contact:

**Brittany Willis, Suicide Prevention Program, Director Tennessee Department of Health**  
[Brittany.Willis@tn.gov](mailto:Brittany.Willis@tn.gov)