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10 Steps We Can Take to Reduce Suicides, Counter Stigma, and Save Lives

*2014 Suicide Prevention Week sets the stage for how Americans
can play a role in saving lives*

Washington, DC— Suicide is one of the United States' most perplexing public health issues. Each year we lose family, friends, and co-workers to suicide. In recognition of the **2014 National Suicide Prevention Week**, September 8 – 14, the National Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention offers **10 Steps We Can Take to Reduce Suicides**. Each of us can play a role in recognizing the critical need of others and encourage help-seeking behavior.

"As a country, there is so much more we can do to come together and work towards saving lives," said Doryn Chervin, Dr.P.H., Executive Secretary of the National Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention and Vice President and Senior Scientist at Education Development Center. "We know more and more about how to support those who are struggling. Each of us can play an important role. Suicide Prevention Week allows us all to focus needed attention on suicide prevention. The **10 Steps We Can Take to Reduce Suicides** is just a start for those who want to get involved, make a difference, and save lives."

1. Help a friend, family member, or loved one. If someone you know is in crisis (no matter how small or big), help is available. By calling the 24/7 National Lifeline, **1-800-273-TALK** (8255), they will be connected to a skilled, trained counselor who will listen, offer support, and can help them find a reason to keep living.
2. Take 5 to Save Lives. By taking 5 minutes to get involved and informed by going to, www.take5tosavelives.org. You can make a difference and become a part of worldwide movement to save lives.
3. Make a connection with a veteran. If you know of a veteran who is struggling with behavioral health challenges or suicidal thoughts and needs support, **Make the Connection**, www.maketheconnection.net, supports veterans and their family members with information, resources, and solutions to issues affecting their lives.
4. Advocate for increased suicide prevention research funding. The Action Alliance's *A Prioritized Research Agenda for Suicide Prevention: An Action Plan to Save Lives* is aimed at prioritizing suicide prevention research and is a call to action to the suicide prevention field to align efforts and more directly prevent suicide attempts and save lives.

5. Join the Action Alliance in ***Changing the Conversation*** about suicide. The Action Alliance is working to leverage the media and national leaders to change the national narratives around suicide and suicide prevention to ones that promote hope, connectedness, social support, resilience, treatment, and recovery. *Changing the Conversation* promotes the cultural norm of providing social support and connectedness for vulnerable individuals to fundamentally change the course for those who are struggling with thoughts of suicide. The work is being pursued via a two-pronged approach:
 - If you work to promote suicide prevention, it is important to carefully develop your messaging. The National Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention *Framework for Successful Messaging* is research-based and outlines four areas to consider when developing messaging: strategy, safety, advancing the “positive narrative”, and following applicable guidelines. The suicidepreventionmessaging.org website describes each of the framework components, provides illustrative examples, and offers resources.
 - If you are a journalist, please follow the *Recommendations for Reporting on Suicide*, which can be located at reportingonsuicide.org.
6. Share a video with America’s first responders. Law enforcement officers and firefighters are the first line of defense in protecting our towns, cities, and communities. This means they are often placed in the middle of highly-traumatic situations and this can cause a lot of increased emotional stress and trauma. In addition to making sure they are physically safe, we also need to make sure they are psychologically safe. While there are no definitive statistics on the number of law enforcement officers who take their own lives annually, estimates put that figure at roughly double the number of officers killed in the line-of-duty each year by felonious assault or traffic-related injury.

Two videos to share with first responders:

- *Breaking the Silence* brings forth courageous stories of police officers openly discussing their own mental health challenges and why seeking mental health support fosters resiliency and overall wellness. Access the video here: <http://youtu.be/u-mDvJIU9RI>.
 - *Firefighters Coping with the Aftermath of Suicide* details self-care steps, peer support measures, suicide warning signs, and available resources to assist firefighters nationwide in coping with suicide. Access the video here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ryy7EyAiyEQ>.
7. Encourage your faith-based community to support suicide prevention. Congregations and communities can play a key role. The Action Alliance’s ***Your Life Matters! campaign*** is an opportunity for every faith community in the United States, regardless of creed, to focus one Sabbath each year on the characteristics common to most faiths that also help prevent suicides. These characteristics are at the very core of what most faith communities are and do, in that they promote hope, build healthy social connections, provide answers to life’s challenging questions, recognize and celebrate the myriad reasons for living and the value of each member in the community, no matter how young or old, weak or strong, healthy or infirmed, and support those who face mental health challenges and/or problems with misuse of alcohol and other drugs, as they seek effective treatment.
<http://actionallianceforsuicideprevention.org/task-force/faith-communities/YLM-home>

8. Support suicide attempt survivors. Suicide Attempt Survivors are emerging with a collective voice and cohesive framework for shaping the future of suicide prevention. The National Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention's guidelines, *The Way Forward: Pathways to hope, recovery, and wellness with insights from lived experience (The Way Forward)*, sets the stage for a constructive collaboration in developing new, more effective techniques for reducing suicide attempts and deaths. Inside *The Way Forward*, you will learn of evidence-based practices which incorporate personal lived experience of recovery and resilience.
9. Learn more about youth involved in the juvenile justice system. These vulnerable youth are much more susceptible to suicidal ideation, attempts, and deaths than youth outside of the system. Youth in residential facilities have nearly three times the suicide rate of their peers in the general population. Read the Action Alliance's set of comprehensive suicide prevention resources to support professionals who work with youth in the juvenile justice system.
 - www.actionallianceforsuicideprevention.org/task-force/juvenilejustice
 - www.ncmhjj.com/projects/other_activities.shtml
10. Provide a resource to a workplace that has lost a co-worker to suicide. Share *A Manager's Guide to Suicide Postvention in the Workplace: 10 Action Steps for Dealing with the Aftermath of Suicide*, with a supervisor who has lost an employee to suicide. In the U.S., the majority of people who take their lives are working-aged, and yet the workplace is often unprepared to deal with the crisis. The guide assists managers and human resources departments in guiding their staff through the loss of a colleague.

The National Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention (www.ActionAllianceforSuicidePrevention.org) is the public-private partnership working to advance the *National Strategy for Suicide Prevention* and make suicide prevention a national priority. Education Development Center, Inc. (EDC) operates the Secretariat for the Action Alliance, which was launched in 2010 by former U.S. Health and Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sebelius and former U.S. Defense Secretary Robert Gates with the goal of saving 20,000 lives in five years. Contact: Eileen Sexton, Director of Communications, 202-572-5383, esexton@edc.org.

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