



**Action Alliance Contact: Eileen Sexton**  
202/572-5383, [esexton@edc.org](mailto:esexton@edc.org)

**NCMHJJ Contact: Karli Keator**  
866/962-6455, [ncmhjj@prainc.com](mailto:ncmhjj@prainc.com)

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## **National Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention Releases Life-Saving Juvenile Justice System Resources**

### **Suicide prevention tools focus on the care of at-risk juveniles**

Washington, DC – The National Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention (Action Alliance) today released a set of comprehensive suicide prevention resources to support professionals who work with youth in the juvenile justice system. The newly developed educational tools advance the *National Strategy for Suicide Prevention*, which guides efforts to prevent suicide across the nation. Online versions of the nine resources are now available to the juvenile justice workforce and the general public at the following websites:

- [www.actionallianceforsuicideprevention.org/task-force/juvenilejustice](http://www.actionallianceforsuicideprevention.org/task-force/juvenilejustice)
- [www.ncmhjj.com/projects/other\\_activities.shtml](http://www.ncmhjj.com/projects/other_activities.shtml)

These resources were developed by the Action Alliance’s Youth in Contact with the Juvenile Justice System Task Force, co-led by the National Center for Mental Health and Juvenile Justice (NCMHJJ) at Policy Research Associates, Inc. and the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP).

“This series of documents provides both a comprehensive overview and practical guidance to administrators and staff working with youth involved with the juvenile justice system,” said Joseph J. Coccozza, Ph.D, Executive Director of NCMHJJ and the task force’s private sector co-lead. “These materials were developed collaboratively over a three-year period by a task force that included some of this country’s leading juvenile justice, mental health, and suicide prevention experts. The work of the task force not only substantially enhances the knowledge base on juvenile suicide prevention, but also provides realistic and helpful strategies for interacting with these at-risk youth. It is a major contribution to the field.”

Youth involved in the juvenile justice system are much more susceptible to suicidal ideation, attempts, and deaths than youth outside of the system. Based on the task force’s literature review, research indicates that nearly one-third of justice-involved youth report having experienced suicidal ideation in the past year and 36 percent have attempted suicide during their lifetimes. Youth in residential facilities have nearly three times the suicide rate of their peers in the general population. Establishing these suicide prevention protocols, guidelines, and tools will further improve the juvenile justice system’s intervention standards and overall mental health care.

The task force brought together key organizations in the justice and suicide prevention fields to address critical issues and crucial gaps. It produced nine publications that focus on the suicide prevention needs of youth in the juvenile justice system.

The organizations that contributed to the development of these resources include: American Institutes for Research; American Probation and Parole Association; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; Council of Juvenile Correctional Administrators; Geneva Youth Residential Treatment Center (Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services); John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation; National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors; National Center on Institutions and Alternatives; National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges; National Institute of Mental Health; National Youth Screening Assessment Project, University of Massachusetts Medical Center; Northwestern University, Feinberg School of Medicine; Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA); and the University of Washington, Division of Public Behavioral Health and Justice Policy.

These new resources address critical program areas and promote life-saving practices such as effective screening, risk assessment, and the drafting of model policies that have been developed in collaboration with other child-serving agencies, particularly mental health. In the upcoming months, SAMHSA and OJJDP will co-host several webinars about these resources.

“OJJDP is proud to have co-lead this Action Alliance task force and is confident that these much-needed resources will strengthen suicide prevention in the juvenile justice system,” said Robert L. Listenbee, Administrator of the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. “We believe suicide is preventable, and these resources can help save the lives of at-risk youth.”

**The new publications include the following:**

- *Preventing Suicide among Youth in Contact with the Juvenile Justice System: Executive Summary*
- *Need to Know: A Fact Sheet Series on Juvenile Suicide*
  - *Juvenile Court Judges and Staff*
  - *Juvenile Detention and Secure Care Staff*
  - *Juvenile Probation Staff*
- *Suicidal Ideation and Behavior among Youth in the Juvenile Justice System: A Review of the Literature*
- *Screening and Assessment for Suicide Prevention: Tools and Procedures for Risk Identification among Juvenile Justice Youth*
- *Guide to Developing and Revising Suicide Prevention Protocols for Youth in Contact with the Juvenile Justice System*
- *Preventing Juvenile Suicide through Improved Collaboration: Strategies for Mental Health and Juvenile Justice Agencies (and shorter Summary of Recommendations)*

**The National Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention**

([www.ActionAllianceforSuicidePrevention.org](http://www.ActionAllianceforSuicidePrevention.org)) is the public-private partnership advancing the *National Strategy for Suicide Prevention* (NSSP) by championing suicide prevention as a national priority, catalyzing efforts to implement high-priority objectives of the NSSP, and cultivating the resources needed to sustain progress. Launched in 2010 by U.S. Health and Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sebelius and former U.S. Defense Secretary Robert Gates, the Action Alliance envisions a nation free from the tragic event of suicide with a goal of saving 20,000 lives in five years. Contact: Eileen Sexton, Director of Communications, 202-572-5383, [esexton@edc.org](mailto:esexton@edc.org).

**The National Center for Mental Health and Juvenile Justice at Policy Research Associates, Inc.**

([www.ncmhjj.com](http://www.ncmhjj.com)) was founded in 2001 to promote awareness of the mental health needs of youth in contact with the juvenile justice system, and to help the field develop improved policies and practices to respond to these youth based on the best available research and practice. Contact: Karli Keator, 866-962-6455 or [ncmhjj@prainc.com](mailto:ncmhjj@prainc.com)

**The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention**

([www.ojjdp.gov](http://www.ojjdp.gov)) provides national leadership, coordination, and resources to prevent and respond to juvenile delinquency and victimization. OJJDP supports states and communities in their efforts to develop and implement effective and coordinated prevention and intervention programs and to improve the juvenile justice system so that it protects public safety, holds offenders accountable, and provides treatment and rehabilitative services tailored to the needs of youth and their families.