

# Suicide Prevention through Public Health Approaches

Health Equity Council

## Executive statement

Suicide is a preventable public health crisis. Reducing and preventing suicides require a comprehensive multi-sectoral public health approach that addresses physical & mental health, family, occupational, community and other contextual factors. Community centered research to understand, develop and implement strategies is urgently needed.

## Background

Suicide is a serious public health issue. Suicide rates in Albuquerque and New Mexico, which are considerably higher than the national average, have been rising over the decades. Suicide rates have also risen significantly during the COVID-19 pandemic. Data shows that in the period 2014-2018, suicide was the second leading cause of death among 15-24 and 25-34 age groups. Recent research also shows that over the last decade, suicide rates have risen at alarming rates among teenagers and children (12 and younger).

There's evidence showing association between suicides and certain risk factors such as mental health; physical health; social, economic and physical stressors; community violence; adverse childhood experiences; relationships with family, peers and community; intimate partner violence; lower access to healthcare, environmental changes; and other major crises.

Response to the crisis requires looking beyond healthcare access. A public health lens recognizes the community, interpersonal, environmental, economic, political and other systemic factors that create or exacerbate risk factors.

There's an urgent need for expanding infrastructures to support community centered approaches for research, data sharing, and interventions to explore the contextual factors for the rising rates of suicide in different populations in Albuquerque.

## Recommendations

### Comprehensive Public Health Approach

Implement a comprehensive public health approach requires using a socioecological lens and strategies that address the needs for prevention, early intervention, treatment and contextual forces of oppression.

### Community Centered Data, Research and Action

Work with the researchers, practitioners, healers and the community for a community based participatory research to better understand the contextual factors for suicide risk.

### Education and Train

Fund and partner with community organizations to increase culturally relevant public health messaging, education and training on suicide prevention, recognizing signs, risk factors, treatment, and public campaigns and trainings for increasing hope and stress resiliency.

### Social Determinants of Health

Create policies to address determinants of health, such as discrimination, employment, income inequality, racism, access to healthcare, access to mental health services, minimum wage, environmental health, and other social determinants of health that influence suicide risk.