

2019-2020 Public Policy Synopsis

Lead

Issues on which AFSP will play a leadership role – developing the policy position, marshaling support, and generating advocacy activity:

Federal

- Increase federal funding for suicide prevention research at the National Institute of Mental Health
- Increase funding for crisis intervention centers to expand their infrastructure to handle growing call volume, convert the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline number (1-800-273-8255) to three-digits, and investigate how to incorporate texting into the existing Lifeline network
- Provide the National Violent Death Reporting System (NVDRS) with enhanced funding to facilitate improvements in training and infrastructure
- Maintain suicide prevention with Service members and Veterans as a national priority
- Ensure Mental Health Parity laws and regulations are uniformly implemented
- Preserve coverage of pre-existing conditions, preventative health services, and no annual or lifetime caps while maintaining mental health and substance use coverage as an essential health care benefit
- Preserve and increase Medicaid and Medicare funding for mental health services

State

- Support comprehensive K-12 school suicide prevention legislation and policies, including mandated training for school personnel and mandated policies on suicide prevention, intervention, and postvention
- Increase funding for, and assist in the implementation and evaluation of state suicide prevention initiatives and plans to prevent suicide across the lifespan
- Increase the number of health professionals who receive regular, evidence-informed education and training in suicide assessment, treatment, and management
- Ensure uniform implementation of federal Mental Health Parity laws and regulations through reporting and oversight, and strengthen parity provisions within state laws

Collaborate

Issues on which AFSP will work as part of a coalition or group, providing active support to achieve these important policy objectives:

Federal

- Support the review, reform, and evaluation of mental health standards, policies and service delivery, as well as programs like Mental Health First Aid
- Expand mental health professional services through a federal loan repayment program to relieve workforce shortages

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- Support funding for suicide prevention authorized in the 21st Century Cures Act, including the Garrett Lee Smith Memorial Act (GLSMA) program and adult suicide prevention program
- Increase funding to address the opioid epidemic and other substance use and alcohol disorders through research, education, prevention, and treatment
- Promote policies and programs to improve access to mental health care and prevent suicide in correctional facilities
- Increase funding for American Indian and Alaskan Native youth suicide prevention and education programs
- Promote policies to prevent LGBTQ+ suicide, including integrating LGBTQ+ populations into existing data collection tools on suicide mortality and safe schools indicators
- Support the construction of barriers to prevent suicide from bridges and other jumping sites
- Authorize and appropriate funds for bullying prevention programs and projects
- Authorize and appropriate funds for Depression Centers of Excellence
- Support workplace policies and programs that promote mental health and prevent suicidal behavior among employees

State

- Support higher education legislation and policies that give college and university students, faculty, and staff the knowledge and tools to prevent suicide
- Increase and sustain adequate state funding for crisis lines and crisis services
- Support state implementation of the National Violent Death Reporting System (NVDRS)
- Increase funding to address the opioid epidemic and other substance use disorders
- Support use of risk-based firearm removal laws (e.g., extreme risk protection orders, gun violence restraining orders, and related court orders) when voluntary removal is unsuccessful or impossible and suicide risk is imminent
- Support the construction of barriers to prevent suicide from bridges and other jumping sites
- Promote policies and programs to improve access to mental health care and prevent suicide in correctional facilities
- Oppose the use of conversion therapy or sexual orientation change counseling as treatment for LGBTQ+ individuals
- Support loan forgiveness and related programs to expand the behavioral healthcare workforce and address provider shortages in underserved areas
- Support workplace policies and programs that promote mental health and prevent suicidal behavior among employees

Mission

Issues related to AFSP's mission that will advance public understanding of suicide prevention:

State

- Assist in the creation of a national brain tissue donor bank and amend existing state laws to include brain tissue within existing organ donation policies and procedures
- Support bullying prevention legislation, policies, and programs, and promote safe messaging around bullying and suicide
- Support the funding and dissemination of Mental Health First Aid programs

Explore

Issues that require further exploration or policy research and analysis, but have not yet become AFSP policy proposals:

State

- Develop an updated AFSP policy position on assisted death (other common terms include physician assisted suicide or Death with Dignity Laws)