

Texas State Plan for Suicide Prevention 2023-2028

Summary

About the *Texas State Plan for Suicide Prevention*



First initiated in 2001 by the Texas Suicide Prevention Planning Committee, the *Texas State Plan for Suicide Prevention* is a multisector plan developed to encompass the public and private partners who have agreed to work together to improve suicide prevention, intervention, and postvention outcomes for our state. In 2002, the Texas Suicide Prevention Council (Council) was established and now comprises over 150 organizations and institutions across the public continuum. The Council oversees the updating and revising of the *Texas State Plan for Suicide Prevention*, which also serves as a communications tool, educating and catalyzing Texas stakeholders to encourage all Texans to work together. By calling

attention to collective goals and working together, stakeholders can—and will—achieve a suicide-safer Texas. The Executive Committee of the Texas Suicide Prevention Council serves as the Planning Committee, led by the Council Co-Chairs: one representing statewide partners and the other representing local coalitions.

Planning Framework

The 2023-2028 *Texas State Plan for Suicide Prevention* was developed with thorough input from Council members and critical stakeholders concerning gaps and priorities, a review of HB 3980 Suicide Data Summary Report and Recommendations, the Texas Health and Human Services Commission *Report on Long-Term Action Plan for Suicide Prevention*, as well as a review of national resources. Working with the Council and stakeholders, the Executive Committee strived to be data-driven to ensure stakeholders could design their implementation actions in a coordinated and meaningful way. Following a four-step framework, including needs assessment, data review, issue/challenge identification, and strategies and action development, the Council determined six key performance areas to be critical to moving suicide prevention, intervention, and postvention forward in Texas, with an overarching priority to develop and promote prevention and reduce crisis-driven mental health care.

It is essential to note that many of the strategies and actions contained in the *Texas State Plan for Suicide Prevention* are currently unfunded and under-resourced. Implementation of specific actions, tasks, and timelines (detailed in a companion document) is contingent on securing the necessary funding.

The Six Key Performance Areas

Key Performance Area 1: Capacity Building

This priority addresses key infrastructure considerations needed to support Texans who may be at risk of suicide. There is a strong need for additional, consistent deployment of best-practice resources, tools, and strategies for prevention, intervention, and postvention. Addressing the need for upstream suicide prevention—intervening at the earliest point possible to reduce the need for crisis intervention—is a high priority for this plan and critical to achieving a significant reduction in deaths by suicide and suicide-related activity.

As evident in many sectors of the economy today, workforce challenges are a critical and strategic concern. Nowhere is this more evident than in the vital crisis continuum. The lifesaving nature of these professions requires an adequately trained and accessible workforce with access to the support they need to address unique workplace concerns, such as secondary trauma, lived experience, caller abuse, and other stressful factors. It is also vital to note the critical role volunteers, peer supporters, law enforcement, and other responders play in suicide prevention, particularly first responders in their execution of a person-centered response to a crisis event. The full range of costs for recruitment, management, training, quality assurance, and infrastructure must be considered as all being part of a successful best practice for all. Three themes surfaced in reviewing and identifying this priority:

- Taking care of caregivers
- Equipping care providers with best-practice training and education on treating suicidality as well as the underlying mental health condition(s)
- Ensuring culturally humble care is available and accessible to all Texans

Key Performance Area 2: Mental Health Workforce

Key Performance Area 3: Communications and Outreach

Creating communications and outreach across various stakeholders both within and outside the public health system is critical and requires complex planning and coordination, especially for suicide prevention. Nowhere has this taken on more importance than implementing 988 as a three-digit replacement for the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline's 10-digit number. Additionally, efforts to eradicate the stigma associated with mental health and suicide through improved outreach and messaging remains crucial, though positive strides have been made in this area.

At the national level, research is fundamental to the continued efforts to improve the knowledge base and suicide prevention, intervention, and postvention outcomes. The work happening across the state of Texas and the nation is clearly important; however, a process to monitor, translate, and disseminate research findings and clinical trials to the community and statewide partners in an organized manner does not exist. This need becomes more critical as the amount of research initiatives continues to grow.

Key Performance Area 4: Research

Key Performance Area 5: Data

Suicide prevention-related data in the state of Texas continue to be a challenge. While significant progress is being made with initiatives such as the HB 3980 report and coordination across the Statewide Behavioral Health Coordinating Council, fundamental access to timely, accurate, and precise data is cumbersome at best. In Texas, the Centers for Disease Control and prevention's WISQARS and WONDER databases offer insight into our state suicide-related activity. However, due to the vast rural regions of the state's geography, precise data points are often missing due to

privacy restrictions or differing procedures for data collection. The ability to assess a community's suicide prevention needs relies on accurate, geographically precise, timely data.

Postvention initiatives are a critical component of a comprehensive approach to suicide prevention and can aid in the healing and recovery process for all involved. Texas community organizations—including schools, law enforcement, first responders, faith-based organizations, Veteran Service Organizations, workplaces, and other social institutions—bear the burden of postvention. The state of Texas often relies on victims' services or not-for-profit organizations to provide suicide loss support groups; however, these initiatives are not universally available across Texas and often vary in levels of services provided. Postvention is a long-term commitment that requires adequate resources to be effective and should be a priority at all levels.

Key Performance Area 6: Postvention