

The
POWER of
COMMUNITY

2025 Annual Report



**American
Foundation
for Suicide
Prevention**





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2025 ANNUAL REPORT WELCOME

A Message from the Chief Executive Officer

Dear Friends,

At AFSP we are dedicated to preventing suicide and supporting those who struggle, as well as those who have lost loved ones to suicide. Important to this mission is our investment in the research, education, advocacy, and support that empowers communities and enables us to look out for each other.

To accomplish our mission, AFSP is continually improving the science upon which we base our work. As the largest private funder of suicide prevention research, we added 36 new studies in 2025, bringing the current research portfolio to over \$30 million. We also partnered with the International Academy for Suicide Research on a summit that brought together 550 researchers from around the world to review the state of the science and address gaps in knowledge aimed at better identification and support for people at risk.

Over the past year, AFSP reached more people than ever before with its prevention and loss support programs through the work of our 73 community-based chapters. We delivered our signature *Talk Saves Lives* program over 1,000 times, and our International Survivors of Suicide Loss Day program was held in 300 communities in the U.S. and 25 counties.

We mobilized our 55,000 volunteer advocates to push for continued federal funding of suicide research, the Comprehensive Suicide Prevention Program, and 988 and crisis services to ensure access to mental health care and crisis support. Further, our state advocacy resulted in 29 state bills signed into law.

We focused on improving suicide care in health care settings, promoted safe storage of firearms, and connected high risk and disproportionately affected populations and occupations, like those working in the construction industry, to programs and resources.

In 2025, we educated the public on how to help someone through our *Talk Away the Dark* campaign, which focuses on adults, and our *Seize the Awkward* campaign in partnership with Ad Council and the National Alliance on Mental Health, which focuses on teens and young adults, including youth of color and LGBTQ+ youth. Further, AFSP's Out of the Darkness Walks raised awareness and funds for suicide prevention with over 240,000 people walking.

The above investments are helping people to look out for each other – so those struggling with their mental health and thoughts of suicide get the help they need, and those bereaved by suicide are supported.

Over the past year, we were encouraged by a slight decrease in suicide in our country. However, we recognize that more progress is needed and are saddened by the loss of 49,000 lives annually to suicide.

We also recognize we can't do our lifesaving work alone, and are grateful to our volunteers, donors, walkers, researchers, advocates, and partner companies and organizations for sharing their passion, lived experience, and expertise with us.

At AFSP, we believe suicide prevention starts with applying what we've learned from science to identify risk and provide evidenced-based care... and by engaging the power of community.



Robert Gebbia

Robert Gebbia
Chief Executive Officer



Ray M Paul, Jr.

Ray Paul
Chair, Board of Directors





By bringing
people together,
we can create
communities.

The Power of Community

Suicide touches so many lives, whether it be from the loss of a loved one, a personal struggle, or caring for someone who may be at risk. Each person's journey is unique. Many find it hard to talk about, creating a sense of isolation that leaves people feeling alone in their experience, and as though there is no help available.

But there is power in community.

By bringing people together, we can create communities who look out for each other, cheer each other on, notice when someone needs help, and take action.

The American Foundation for Suicide Prevention was built on a sense of community. Founded in 1987, AFSP – now the largest private funder of suicide prevention research, with local chapters in all 50 states, D.C., and Puerto Rico – united families

who'd lost loved ones with scientists seeking to learn more. AFSP continues to unite people with a common purpose through the Out of the Darkness Walks and a Policy and Advocacy Office mobilizing Volunteer Advocates across the country.

We are a nationwide network of impassioned people who learn together, heal together, laugh together, and cry together, strengthened by our shared dedication to saving lives and bringing hope to those affected by suicide.

Join us.

IMPACT



Measuring Impact: Counting on Each Other

At AFSP, every number we measure represents people – friends, neighbors, and loved ones – whose lives matter. Looking out for each other means ensuring our work reaches real people in meaningful ways. That is why we go beyond counting event attendance or social media impressions. We focus on understanding how our programs and initiatives touch lives, spark hope, inspire action, and help communities feel supported. By listening to what the data tells us, we learn about people’s stories and experiences. With these insights, we can continually improve, making sure every action we take is another step toward a world without suicide.

Our Approach

We know from decades of research that the most effective way to address suicide is through connected, community-wide efforts that move people and communities from a sense of awareness to taking action to save lives. Guided by this understanding, AFSP’s approach is multi-faceted: we build knowledge, shift attitudes, and inspire behavior change, empowering people to care for themselves and support one another.

Our Continuum of Impact helps us stay focused on what matters most: people. Whether it’s through a community presentation, a public awareness campaign, an advocacy win, or an Out of the Darkness Walk, we use rigorous and systematic methods to measure how our work makes a difference in the people’s lives every day.

To measure impact, we start by developing each program with its specific intended purpose and audience in mind. We then gather feedback from communities through needs assessments and public opinion polling, design culturally responsive tools to capture experiences and impact, and carefully evaluate the outcomes of our programs and initiatives. This process shows us not only the scope of our reach but the depth of our impact. Every insight helps us refine and expand our efforts so that, together, we can reach more people, offer more hope, and keep looking out for each other.



Our Continuum of Impact helps us stay focused on what matters most: people.



OVER 1.67M

people reached through in-person and virtual programs and events





Impact at a glance

97% of AFSP program and event attendees would recommend them to others

Nearly 40% of program and event attendees had never attended a suicide prevention related presentation in the past, indicating that AFSP is reaching new audiences

Spanish language programs reached nearly 2,500 people, a 66% increase from fiscal year 2024

LOSS & HEALING



Connecting Loss Survivors With Opportunities for Healing

Each year, suicide impacts millions of people. Through events like International Survivors of Suicide Loss Day and resources such as *After a Suicide: Postvention Toolkit for Workplaces*, AFSP lets survivors of suicide loss know they are not alone, offering a sense of community and helping them navigate the deeply personal and often complex journey toward healing.

Supporting Loss Survivors Through Real-Time Events

International Survivors of Suicide Loss Day, also known as Survivor Day, takes place every year on the Saturday before American Thanksgiving. The moment offers a unique opportunity for thousands of suicide loss survivors to come together at events across the country, where they find much-needed support, comfort, and healing through shared experience. In addition to in-person events, AFSP also hosts two virtual events: *Día De Esperanza* (Day of Hope), which offers support for Hispanic and Latinx communities, and *Survivor Day Live*.

In November 2024, AFSP expanded promotion of Survivor Day programs to reach more diverse audiences, including Black and African American communities, Native American and Indigenous Peoples, Spanish speakers, members of the Deaf Community, as well as veterans, military members, and first responders.

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AFSP lets survivors of suicide loss know they are not alone.

Programs & Resources Designed to Help Navigate Loss

In addition to in-person and virtual events, AFSP offers evergreen resources and programs – like Healing Conversations and Suicide Bereavement Support Group Facilitator Training – created specifically by and for survivors of suicide loss.

In November 2024, AFSP launched *After a Suicide: Postvention Toolkit for Workplaces*, an in-depth resource designed for use by organizational leaders and human resource professionals in the aftermath of a suicide death in the workplace. This toolkit has also been tailored for various workplaces, such as the construction and pharmaceutical industries, in order to most effectively meet the unique needs of each.

This year, AFSP also produced insightful new interviews for our *Living With Suicide Loss* video series, as well as the expansion of its viewership since the initial series launch in 2023. This video library features recorded interviews with survivors of suicide loss, who each share the different ways they have navigated the pain of loss and found pathways toward healing.



703,310

Impressions generated across AFSP's social media channels by our *Living With Suicide Loss* video series

Survivor Day 2024, at a glance

7,550 participants – a 12.6% increase over 2023

97% would recommend the program to others

184,510 views of Survivor Day Live – over twice as many views as last year

97,640 views of Día de Esperanza – a 10% increase over 2023

VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

Wendy Mercer

North Florida Chapter

"I became involved with AFSP after losing my 17-year-old goddaughter, Hannah, to suicide in 2019. I attended my first Out of the Darkness Walk in 2021 in Jacksonville, Florida, with Hannah's mom and family.

It was emotional and eye opening. I hadn't realized so many others in my area had been affected by suicide. Seeing photos of lost loved ones on t-shirts and posters was very impactful. I could see Hannah's mom recognize the pain in other mothers' eyes. They didn't have to say anything. Just knowing they'd experienced the same type of loss was all they needed to have a mutual understanding of the particular type of pain that comes with suicide. The next year, I was on the Walks committee.

A few weeks later, I volunteered at my first International Survivor of Suicide Loss Day event – which that year happened to be held at the high school Hannah and both of my sons attended.

Two mothers were there who had lost their sons. One of the mothers had her daughter with her, a young teen who shared about the loss of her older brother, her best friend. I was so moved by these families that I thought to myself, 'I'm going to do as much as I can to help prevent another family from going through this unimaginable pain.'

Being around others who understand this type of loss is comforting. The guilt and 'what if' questions I was feeling were all too well understood by the other attendees.

I became a board member some months later, and so did both of those amazing mothers. We have become what I hope to be lifelong friends.

Volunteering with AFSP reminds me to check on people I know who may be struggling. It has taught me to look out for others, and let them know I am there for them, whenever they need me."



PREVENTION EDUCATION



Empowering Communities Through Suicide Prevention Education

Public understanding of suicide and mental health has come a long way since AFSP's founding. Today, it is more widely understood that mental health is just as important as physical health, and that suicide is a serious public health matter that needs a public health response. The good news is that, with the help of scientific research findings, we now know suicide can often be prevented. Equipped with the right information, we can all play a role in helping to fight this leading cause of death. That's why suicide prevention education is a cornerstone of our mission – so that each of us can confidently spot the risk factors, protective factors, and warning signs of suicide in others, and so that we can be sure what steps to take when someone we know is struggling.

Expanding Our Reach With Evidence-Informed Programs

AFSP offers a range of education programs backed by research and delivered in communities across the country. Our flagship education program, *Talk Saves Lives: An Introduction to Suicide Prevention (TSL)*, was created to address the scope of this leading cause of death, and to share the research on risk factors and warning signs of suicide, as well as strategies to help prevent it. Since its original conception, *Talk Saves Lives* has been adapted for versions that meet the specific needs of a range of communities, including LGBTQ+ people, Latinx and Hispanic people, construction industry professionals, and those in correctional environments. This past September 2025, *Talk Saves Lives* earned recognition from the Suicide Prevention Resource Center (SPRC) on its Best Practices Registry (BPR).



Suicide prevention education is a cornerstone of our mission.

Through *TSL* and other impactful programs like *L.E.T.S. Save Lives: An Introduction to Suicide Prevention for Black and African American Communities*, *It's Real* and *More Than Sad* for supporting youth mental health, and other programs created by and for specific groups, AFSP's education programming empowers communities with knowledge that helps to save lives and raise awareness about suicide and mental health.

Deepening Our Work in Firearms and Veteran Communities

In October 2024, AFSP launched its first learning collaborative, *AFSP CONNECTS: Firearms*, with the goal of helping our nationwide network of chapters better understand how to engage firearm communities in suicide prevention efforts. Over the course of nine monthly meetings, the firearms learning collaborative has led 13 volunteers from 10 AFSP chapters to become more confident in firearms suicide prevention. In January 2025, that same learning collaborative model was adapted to create *AFSP CONNECTS: Veterans*, designed to help chapters increase engagement with veteran communities.

This past year, AFSP updated our firearms webpage, which now includes information about the broader scope of firearm suicide, and how to protect yourself and others through secure storage and help seeking; specific guidance for ranges, retailers, and instructors; and an in-depth description of AFSP's stance on firearm-related public policies. On the webpage, you can now find the "Suicide Prevention Toolkit for Firearms Instructors," which includes a scripted slide deck that instructors can use to incorporate suicide prevention into their firearms courses. To date, over 100 instructors have downloaded the slides, potentially reaching over 10,000 firearm owners this year alone.

Talk Saves Lives, at a glance

Since its launch in 2015, *Talk Saves Lives* has reached over 335,000 people

***Talk Saves Lives: An Introduction to Suicide Prevention for the Latinx and Hispanic Communities* delivered 81 presentations reaching over 2,000 people this past year – a 96% increase over the year before**

VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

Eleanor Vestal

Iowa Chapter

"I think I've always struggled with my mental health. But I never fully understood it until April and May of 2018, when I experienced anxiety and panic attacks, depression, self-harm, suicidal ideation, and plans to take my own life. I felt hopeless and helpless. Thankfully, I committed to a week of inpatient hospitalization, several weeks of an outpatient therapy program, and about a year of individual talk therapy.

During my recovery, I discovered AFSP. I attended the Central Iowa Out of the Darkness Walk that September. Shortly after that Walk, I decided I wanted to volunteer and advocate for suicide prevention and mental health. Since then, I've participated in several Out of the Darkness Walks, Advocacy Action Days at the Iowa State Capitol, and many other events for my chapter.

I had a wonderful support system during my darkness in 2018, made up of family and friends who only had the best interest in looking out for me. I still have that today. But I was so far in the dark at that time that I didn't want to burden them with my struggles. I didn't think it was fair to reach out to them.

But that's the thing – everyone struggles with something in their life. Some more than others. But it's what makes us human. To this day, I still struggle with anxiety and depression, but I've been able to manage it with what I've learned through treatment and therapy.

One of the reasons I didn't want to reach out to my support system during my crisis is that I didn't think anyone really understood how to help me. That's why it's so nice to know about recent AFSP education programs like *Finding Hope: Guidance For Supporting Those At Risk*. If something like that had existed then, it could've helped me educate my family and friends about what I was dealing with. We all have people in our lives to look out for – and we all deserve people who will look out for us."



RESEARCH



Understanding Suicide Through Leading Scientific Research

Since its founding in 1987, AFSP has led the way in advancing suicide prevention research by funding innovative studies, growing a vibrant scientific community, and ensuring that new discoveries reach those who can put them into action. With the generous support of our donors, AFSP remains the largest private funder of suicide prevention research and is wholeheartedly committed to leveraging our findings toward lifesaving strategies.

Funded Studies: Investing in the Future of Suicide Prevention Research

For AFSP, this was a year of action and empowering communities. We funded grants for 36 new research studies totaling \$8.5 million. To date, AFSP's diverse portfolio amounts to more than \$25 million in grants exploring the many factors contributing to suicide and the most effective ways to prevent it. Our Scientific Advisory, composed of more than 250 experts, helps shape the direction of these investments, ensuring that every study advances our understanding of this complex issue.

Growing Our Scientific Community

Beyond funding, research at AFSP is about community. In 2025, AFSP hosted its third Mentoring Immersion for Early Career Researchers (MIECR) program, designed to help early career investigators develop the skills and support networks they need to succeed. Along with their mentors, 15 participants from across the world engaged in didactic sessions, collaborative activities, and intense reworking of their AFSP grant applications. At its heart, MIECR is a reminder

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Beyond funding,
research at
AFSP is about
community.

that science progresses when we look out for one another, and when experienced mentors take the time to guide, encourage, and inspire the next generation.

AFSP brought researchers together through conferences and meetings, such as the Suicide Research Symposium, a free and virtual opportunity for researchers to meet, foster collaboration, and share purpose. These gatherings reflect our belief that suicide prevention cannot be advanced alone: it requires the strength of a connected, global community willing to learn from one another and work toward solutions together.

Delivering Our Findings to Those Who Need It

Equally vital is our commitment to sharing the findings of the research we fund to help develop a community where everyone can knowledgeably talk about suicide prevention. This year, AFSP launched a newly restructured Research webpage, making it easier for the public, clinicians, and researchers to access the latest science. Through mediums like the quarterly Research Connection series and monthly Research Connection Roundup, we translate technical findings into accessible stories, ensuring that knowledge does not remain confined to journals and reaches the communities and individuals who need it most.

From funding groundbreaking studies to mentoring the next generation and amplifying our findings for the public, AFSP's research efforts this year reflect what it means to look out for each other: learning more, sharing more, and saving more lives.

Learn more about AFSP's current scientific grants at afsp.org/grants2025.





OUT OF THE DARKNESS WALKS



Raising Funds and Awareness Through the Community, Campus and Overnight Walks

Whether it's a fraternity or sorority member or teacher showing up to a Campus Walk, energized to let students and the school community know there's no shame when it comes to supporting mental health and seeking help... someone who's lost a friend, coworker, or family member, or who has their own experience of suicidal crisis joining a Community Walk... or one of the thousands of people flying across the country to walk through the night at the annual Overnight Walk... AFSP's Walks participants are truly bringing suicide out of the darkness.

Everywhere, everyone, every dollar: the Out of the Darkness Walks are how most people first hear of and become a part of the AFSP family, engaging with their local chapter and helping to galvanize our national efforts to combat this leading cause of death and provide comfort and support to those affected. In addition to Walkers sending the message through their physical presence that suicide can no longer exist in the shadows, the funds raised through the Walks help make possible research, education and loss programs, advocacy, and more.

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The Walks are about camaraderie, raising crucial funds, and people finding comfort in their shared connection.

\$ 24M RAISED

**Nearly 600 Community and Campus Walks with
over 220k participants**

The Walks are a labor of love that have tremendous impact. And it isn't just Walks participants themselves who show up.

Communities, campuses, neighbors, workplaces, sponsors, and other groups come together as people “step up” to make each of these events the inspiring and successful events they are: from Walker Coaches in AFSP’s national office guiding Overnight participants months ahead of the event to help them reach their physical and fundraising goals; to dedicated volunteers and chapter staff working together to arrange the logistics of each Walk; to the people handing out Honor Beads whose colors let Walkers signify their specific personal connection to the cause; to those cheering Walkers on along the route. The Walks are about camaraderie, raising crucial funds, and people finding comfort in their shared connection.

The Overnight, at a glance

**The 30th Overnight since the
first event in 2002**

\$3 million raised

1,500 participants

**Over 350 Overnight Walk
teams organized in tribute
to a specific individual**

**32 “North Stars”
(who raised over \$10k)**

**“The most challenging and
rewarding thing I do each
year: hearing others’ stories,
making new friends, and
fundraising for such an
important cause that
connects us all.”**

VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

Laurie Mata

Indiana Chapter

Losing our son Andrew led us to attend our first AFSP Chicagoland Walk in 2016, just three weeks after his passing. That day gave us a sense of community, letting us know we were not alone and that other families were walking through the same painful reality.

Being surrounded by people who understood our grief inspired us to share our story and Andrew's experience. We continued to walk with the Chicago community for several years, and in 2018 I was honored to speak at the Walk and share our story. In 2018 I was given the opportunity to honor Andrew's memory and promote the Chicagoland Walk during a segment on *The Jam* TV show on WCIU during National Suicide Prevention Week. I also completed the 2021 Bank of America Chicago Marathon with Team AFSP's Race for Hope to raise money and spread awareness.

For several years, we walked and raised funds for both the Chicago and Northwest Indiana events. In 2023, we made the decision to focus our efforts on advocating within our hometown of Northwest Indiana. We were warmly welcomed by the AFSP Indiana Chapter. Volunteering with them has brought us a deep sense of peace and purpose, knowing I am doing God's work by helping others.

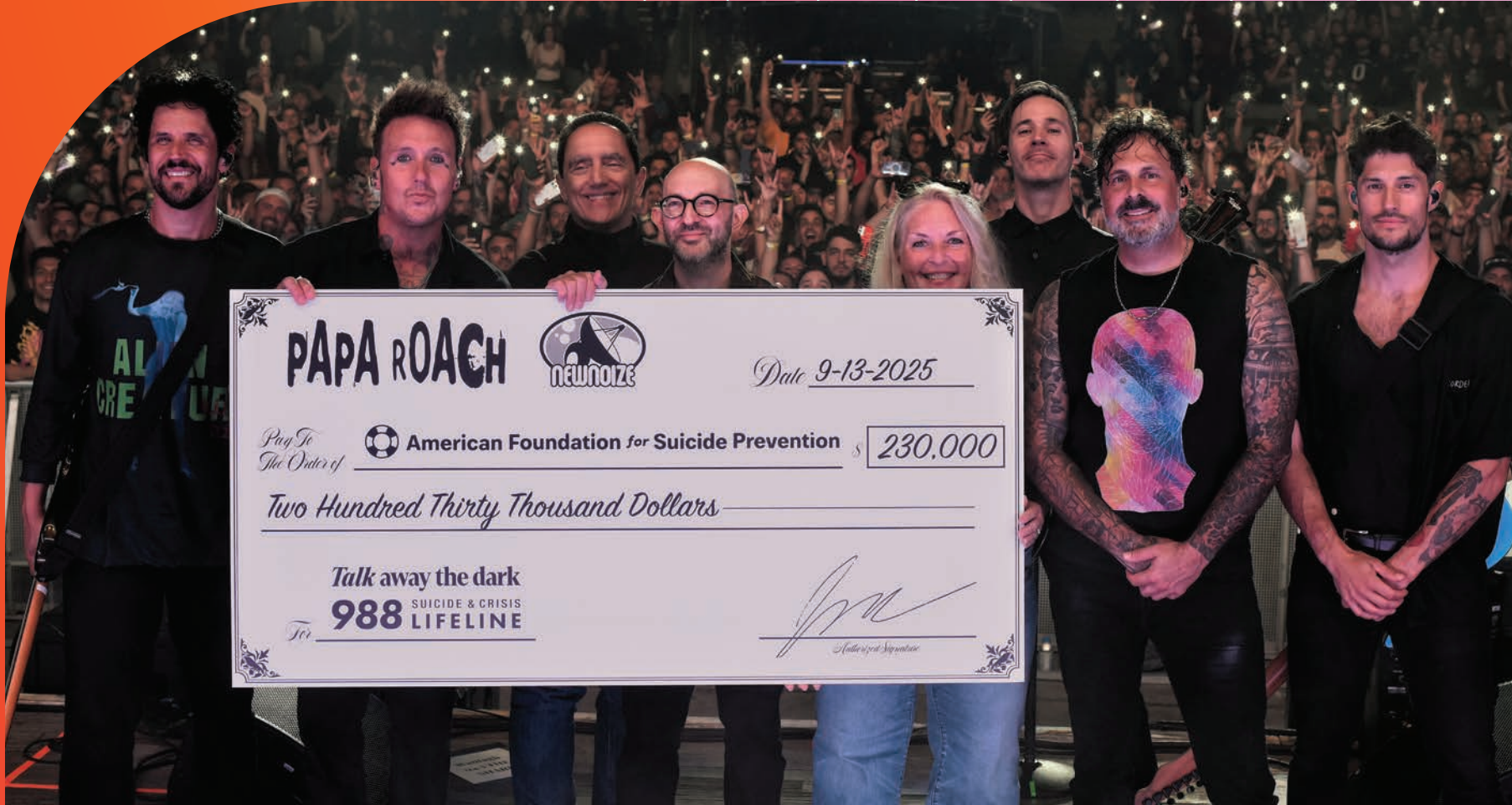
Over the past nine years Mata Strong – the team we've organized in memory of Andrew – has held several fundraisers, raising over \$50k to support AFSP and this cause we are so passionate about, knowing it would be used to fund efforts such as scientific research, loss support, public policy advocacy, and suicide prevention education programs.

Most recently, I began training to become a peer presenter for *Talk Saves Lives: An Introduction to Suicide Prevention for the Latinx and Hispanic Communities* (available in English and Spanish). This program is important because it empowers Latinx individuals and families with knowledge, understanding, and tools that can save lives. It helps break barriers in the Latinx community by challenging the stigma around mental health and encouraging individuals to seek help without shame or fear.

Through every step of this journey, Andrew's memory continues to guide and inspire me to bring hope and healing to others.



CAMPAIGNS & CULTURE



PAPA ROACH



Date 9-13-2025

Pay To
The Order of



American Foundation for Suicide Prevention

\$ 230,000

Two Hundred Thirty Thousand Dollars

Talk away the dark

988 SUICIDE & CRISIS LIFELINE

For

[Signature]
Author's personal signature

Raising our Culture's Understanding

Raising our culture's understanding of mental health and suicide prevention is a vital part of saving lives and ensuring our friends, neighbors, coworkers and family members feel empowered to look out for the people in their lives, and care for their own mental health. Through national campaigns, social media, public relations, popular entertainment and more, AFSP inspires our society to become more proactive in making a difference.

Shaping Narratives, Encouraging Ethical Reporting, and Inspiring Conversation

We continued providing confidential, bespoke consultation for the entertainment industry on safe storytelling and messaging for TV shows, films, podcasts, literature, and musicians through relationships including Netflix, Paramount/MTV, Amazon MGM, *This American Life*, Image Comics, and Warner Bros. Discovery, which aired AFSP's *Talk Away the Dark* PSA film in support of National Suicide Prevention Awareness Month. Our partnership with rock band Papa Roach grew this past year through the hit Carrie Underwood duet version of *Leave a Light On (Talk Away the Dark)*, AFSP chapter tabling throughout their tour, and an emotional onstage moment devoted to AFSP and suicide prevention.

AFSP also launched its Ethical Reporting Advisory Committee: a group of journalists lending their expertise to help steer AFSP's ethical reporting and messaging on suicide. Members serve as ambassadors of ethical reporting for AFSP, joining us in creating and spreading education on this topic, and creating mental health stories that model these standards. This past year, AFSP presented its education program *Ethical Reporting Saves Lives* to NBC Universal, the National Hispanic Journalists Association, and the National Gay and Lesbian Journalist Association.

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AFSP inspires our society to become more proactive in making a difference.

This past year, AFSP's experts were featured in over 40 news stories, on topics including suicide in the military, the debate on terminology such as "unalived," the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline, youth mental health, AI therapists, and more. The top 15 stories were seen by an estimated 950K people across media sites where the stories were featured.

Promoting Resilience and Connection in May, September, and Throughout the Year

Suicide prevention is important every day of the year. But May and September – Mental Health Awareness Month and Suicide Prevention Awareness Month – offer opportunities to capture the public's interest through campaigns that draw attention to our cause, providing hope, resources, and calls to action. Our May campaign, *In This Together: Building Emotional Resilience in Ourselves and Our Communities*, offered the public game-changing strategies we can take to encourage our personal and collective resilience, while our September campaign, *Looking Out for Each Other*, brought people together through the Out of the Darkness Walks and local chapters.

Our *Seize the Awkward* Campaign, in partnership with the Ad Council and the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), continued to inspire young people to check in on their friends, providing them with practical suggestions on how to do so.



Musician Jonah Marais of the band Why Don't We opened up about mental health to his 1.7M Instagram followers and AFSP's audience in a virtual AFSP #RealConvo Concert in May

Lifesaver Ambassadors program, at a glance

The program, launched this past year on social media, engaged eight notable content creators including Tefi Pessoa, Dr. Charlie Amáyá Scott, and Michell Clark to amplify suicide prevention messaging among the influencers' followers, emphasizing the critical role that these important conversations play in suicide prevention.

Outperformed industry benchmarks, with over 2M impressions and views, and an average engagement rate of 3.44%

92,367 new @AFSPNational followers this year across channels including Instagram, Facebook, X, TikTok, and LinkedIn

212,021,857 Impressions and 1,792,554 Engagements

Reaching Diverse Audiences Through Research and Shared Cultural Understanding

This year, AFSP launched The Upright – a collection of AFSP’s resources including research, programs, and policy – that aims to advance health equity in suicide prevention. The Upright is a part of AFSP’s commitment to support communities with disproportionate impacts related to suicide. Research tells us that developing suicide prevention strategies for underrepresented individuals must be anchored with the understanding that communities have unique lived experiences and need to see their experiences and identities reflected in resources.

To further deepen conversations around people’s shared experience, we also worked with HUMAN Group Media to launch the AFSP Podcast Channel, the official home for three unique series focused on mental health, suicide prevention, and health equity:

Strong Talk, hosted by Vic Armstrong, AFSP’s vice president for health equity and engagement, featuring in-depth conversations with mental health experts, advocates, and leaders about the challenges and solutions to making mental health care accessible to all.

Ask Dr. Jill, hosted by Dr. Jill Harkavy-Friedman, AFSP’s senior vice president of research, answering real mental health questions with the latest scientific research and help from fellow experts in the field.

Elevating Voices, a roundtable discussion series, hosted by Vic Armstrong and other AFSP leaders and clinical experts, bringing together members of diverse communities to uncover the unique mental health challenges they face, and discuss strategies for solving them.



Comedian Gary Gulman shared with AFSP’s audience his own personal resilience tips, which have helped him manage his own mental health following a serious crisis and hospitalization

POLICY AND ADVOCACY



Promoting Suicide Prevention and Mental Health Through Strategic Policy and Advocacy

AFSP's Policy and Advocacy Office in Washington, D.C., galvanizes a nationwide network of Volunteer Advocates each year, who stand up for bills and legislation we know can make a difference. By sharing our unified voice through AFSP's online Action Center, and attending events like Advocacy Action Days and the annual Advocacy Forum, anyone can play a role in saving lives.

Advancing Priorities

Updated every two years, AFSP's Public Policy Priorities are used by advocates, partners, and public officials at all levels of government to identify policy opportunities to better promote suicide prevention and improve mental health.

Services and Care

Lethal Means Safety

Research and Infrastructure

Disproportionately Affected Communities and Populations

This year's newly updated priorities designate Lethal Means Safety as a new pillar encompassing Firearms (suicide prevention) and Architectural Barriers and Structures, and includes a new focus on Medications, Toxic Chemicals, and Other Substances, which can increase suicide risk if accessible to people with risk factors for suicide.

AFSP also expanded its priority areas to include Pregnant and Postpartum Individuals within the pillar Disproportionately Affected Communities and Populations, in alignment with data indicating suicide is a leading cause of preventable maternal mortality and its associated health disparities.

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Anyone can
play a role in
saving lives.

Taking Action

In 2025, AFSP rebranded our signature state advocacy events as Advocacy Action Days. Formerly State Capitol Days, the new Advocacy Action Day event format brings a renewed focus to actionable ways advocates can support AFSP's top state policy priorities, share their lived experience and personal stories with public officials, and influence meaningful policy changes to prevent suicide. AFSP chapters held 45 Advocacy Action Day events in state capitals across the country and celebrated 29 bills being enacted that were directly supported by these events.

We also launched the revamped Advocacy Ambassador Program, a new opportunity for experienced volunteers leading suicide prevention policy and advocacy in their states. With expanded training and engagement opportunities, the program has grown by over 50%, building a stronger community of advocates to advance AFSP's mission.

Notable Policy & Advocacy Wins

Among the most notable advocacy successes of this past year, the Arkansas Chapter celebrated the passage of Arkansas Act 106 (HB 1067) "Concerning Firearm Hold Agreements; And to Provide Civil Immunity to a Federal Firearms Licensee Who Agrees to Hold a Firearm for an Individual." The chapter led advocacy efforts by building relationships with organizations throughout the state, meeting with state legislators, and testifying at committee hearings, which culminated in the new law that will provide more options for secure, out-of-home firearms storage across the state.

AFSP advocates were also instrumental in passing the Commitment to Veteran Support and Outreach (CVSO) Act, a central focus of the 2023 Advocacy Forum. This new federal law creates a grant program administered by the Department of Veterans Affairs to support tribal and county Veterans Service Officers (VSOs), who assist Veterans and their families in accessing service-connected benefits. The program prioritizes grant awards to areas with a critical shortage of county or tribal VSOs, areas with high rates of suicide among veterans, and areas with high numbers of referrals to the Veterans Crisis Line.



VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

Callie Parr

Montana Chapter

"In 2017, I lost my boyfriend, Cody, to suicide. We had known each other since childhood, and had begun dating as adults, two years before he died. That loss pulled me deeper into addiction and depression, and for a long time, I didn't know how to move forward. When my family and I joined our first Out of the Darkness Walk, I had no idea how much it would change us. For the first time, I felt surrounded by people who truly understood, and I began to see a path forward. Today, I have been in recovery for over six years, my children are thriving, and I now serve as Walk Chair for the very event that first gave me hope.

My healing has also reconnected me to my culture as a Little Shell Chippewa descendant, grounding me in traditions and resilience that I carry into my work. I share my story through powwows, community events, and local outreach by creating spaces for conversations around suicide, grief, and healing.

Alongside this community work, I've also stepped into public policy advocacy with AFSP, participating in both statewide and national Advocacy Action Days. Meeting with lawmakers to share my story allows me to lift the voices of those who have a connection to this cause into policies that shape suicide prevention. This includes securing support for the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline, and ensuring that minority populations, including tribal populations and LGBTQ+ communities, and veterans, have equitable access to care.

From attending that first Walk, when I was carrying such profound loss, to now leading community efforts and advocating for change at every level, I've seen how powerful it is when we come together. This work gives meaning to my loss, strength to my recovery, and purpose for the future. I share my story so others know they are not alone and that together, we can turn loss into healing, resilience, and hope."



PARTNERSHIPS



Building Strategic Partnerships for System-Wide Change

Suicide is a complex health issue impacting a diverse range of communities. Through strategic partnerships, AFSP influences systems change enabling key stakeholders to bring suicide prevention strategies designed to have the most impact within particularly at-risk environments.

Preventing Suicide in Firearms Settings

Firearms account for over half of all suicide deaths in the U.S., and firearm owners encompass every demographic and over 40% of households in the U.S. It is critical we educate as many people as possible about the basics of firearm safety and suicide prevention. In addition to educating the public about safe storage practices – as well as providing suicide prevention education designed for retailers, range owners, and firearm owners – AFSP also has a longstanding ongoing partnership with the National Shooting Sports Foundation (NSSF). Through this partnership, AFSP has helped to distribute over 9,000 suicide prevention toolkits to American Legion posts, including potentially life-saving information about veterans and firearm suicide prevention.

Preventing Suicide in Health Care Systems

Up to 45% of people who die by suicide visit their primary care physician in the month prior to their death – meaning health care providers are uniquely positioned to play a critical role in identifying those at risk for suicide. AFSP is dedicated to empowering health care providers with lifesaving tools and strategies for supporting patients at risk.



AFSP is
dedicated to
empowering
health care
professionals.

Working With Pediatric Health Care Providers to Address Youth Suicide

For decades, suicide and suicidal behavior among youth and young adults has become an increasingly urgent public health crisis. Suicide is the second leading cause of death among young people 10-24 years of age in the U.S – an issue we’re addressing through our ongoing partnership with the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP).

Through Project ECHO (Extension for Community Healthcare Outcomes) – a telementoring program designed to create communities of learners by bringing together pediatric health clinicians and experts using didactic and case-based presentations, fostering an “all learn, all teach” approach – we’re able to operationalize the best practices recommended for pediatric health clinicians in the Blueprint for Youth Suicide Prevention. This past year, through our partnership with AAP, we reached 275 pediatric health clinicians – a 10% increase in participants from the previous year. In total, the program has reached 620 pediatric clinicians.

Bringing Suicide Prevention to Health-System Pharmacists

In 2025, AFSP partnered with the American Society of Health-System Pharmacists (ASHP) to deliver prevention education resources and materials to pharmacists who serve as patient care providers in hospitals, ambulatory clinics, and other health care settings. Through a customized toolkit and *Talk Saves Lives* webinar, we helped ASHP residents, instructors, and residency program directors to recognize and address mental health challenges among patients, while also equipping residents with tools for self-advocacy and support.

Firearms account for over half of all suicide deaths in the U.S. In partnership with the NSSF, AFSP has helped to distribute over 9,000 suicide prevention toolkits to American Legion posts

This past year, our partnership with AAP helped us reach 275 pediatric health providers – a 10% increase in participants from the previous year

In total, the Project ECHO program for pediatric health clinicians has reached 620 participants

This past year, *Talk Saves Lives: An Introduction to Suicide Prevention in the Correctional Environment* reached 2,697 participants across 350 presentations

Preventing Suicide in Corrections Systems

Research shows that people who are incarcerated are particularly vulnerable to suicide. Suicide is the number one leading cause of death in jails, and suicide in prisons has increased 30% in recent years.

That's why AFSP adapted our flagship *Talk Saves Lives* program to create *Talk Saves Lives: An Introduction to Suicide Prevention in the Correctional Environment*, a presentation that informs corrections staff on how to create a safer environment for people in custody, while also providing staff with resources to support their own mental health. Through this program, we continue to reach corrections staff by partnering with states to make system-level changes in correctional environments. This past year we were able to reach 2,697 participants across 350 presentations.

CONSTRUCTION



Confronting Suicide in the Construction Industry

America's construction workforce is vital to our nation's infrastructure. Tragically, the construction industry has one of the highest suicide rates among all professions in the U.S., with about five times as many construction workers losing their lives to suicide compared to the general population. At AFSP, we cannot ignore the urgency of this issue.

Hard Hat Courage, the AFSP initiative representing the construction industry's collective commitment to address suicide in construction, was developed this fiscal year following the March 2024 announcement of a multiyear partnership with Bechtel dedicated to fighting suicide in the construction industry. Over the course of the five-year grant, Bechtel's \$7 million commitment to AFSP – the largest pledge in AFSP's history and the largest single donation from the Bechtel Group Foundation – will provide critical resources and programming to 500,000 U.S. construction workers. Programming started to rollout during Construction Safety Week in May 2025, and as of September's Construction Suicide Prevention Week (CSPW), the initiative has reached more than 188,000 workers with education and campaign materials. Bechtel's leading industry knowledge and influence, in combination with AFSP's expertise in suicide prevention research and education, is a powerful force for effecting change and providing hope within the construction industry.

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Effecting change and providing hope within the construction industry.

Charting a Course for the Future

As part of its five-year commitment to AFSP, Bechtel formed the CEO Advisory Council in October 2024, teaming up with top construction-industry executives to represent more than three million construction and union workers across the U.S. This past March, AFSP hosted the CEO Advisory Council's inaugural meeting, with executives attending from Bechtel, Fluor, Turner Construction, North America's Building Trades Unions (NABTU), Kiewit, Clark Construction, DPR Construction, and Skanska. The initial meeting was an important moment to reflect on the partnership's first year and to continue building an agenda by evaluating current initiatives, discussing industry-wide strategies, and establishing goals to lower suicide rates and improve mental health across the construction industry. The CEO Advisory Council has since welcomed Stanley Blacker & Decker as a member, and AFSP has formed partnerships across the construction industry, including a partnership with the Association of Equipment Manufacturers announced in April 2024 and CSPW.

Building Culturally Competent Programs

This past May, AFSP launched *Talk Saves Lives: An Introduction to Suicide Prevention in the Construction Industry* – the first available resource that will ultimately make up a larger toolkit of construction-specific education and support programs. Informed by industry professionals, *Talk Saves Lives: Construction* is a new program adapted from our flagship, peer-to-peer educational program *Talk Saves Lives: An Introduction to Suicide Prevention*. The presentation provides an overview of suicide in the construction industry, risk factors and warning signs of suicide, and strategies to prevent it.



Construction Hike for Hope is a series of local hiking events hosted by AFSP in communities across the country to raise awareness about mental health and suicide prevention in the construction industry.

First Impressions — *Talk Saves Lives:* *Construction*

(20-Minute Version)

Reached over 545 individuals within first two months post-launch

100% of respondents reported gaining new knowledge from the presentation

93% of respondents expressed willingness to seek help if they themselves are struggling

98% of respondents would recommend the presentation to others

VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

Vince Hafeli Southwest Florida Chapter

"When I was 45 years old, a caring phone call thankfully prevented me from taking my own life. I lived with that secret for 14 years. But once I began telling my story, my life changed.

I work in construction: a harsh, competitive, macho industry where we don't often share our emotions. I asked myself how I could further deepen the conversation to educate others about preventing suicide. I heard about AFSP's Out of the Darkness Walks, and asked myself, 'What if we did a local construction walk in the Sarasota area?' But why stop there? I asked other members of the Florida construction industry if they'd like to be involved. That quickly evolved into a statewide AFSP Construction Hike for Hope at five locations in Florida.

Now that Florida was a success, the next step in the mission was to go national. I reached out to industry friends to gauge their interest. Rob Labbe in New York told me to count him in, and he was off and running."

Rob Labbe Hudson Valley/Westchester Chapter

"I've personally witnessed the impact of this issue on family, friends, and colleagues. One of my greatest challenges – and greatest joys – has been encouraging some of the toughest, most independent people in construction to accept that, 'It's okay to not be okay.' Since many of us spend more time with colleagues than with our own families, it's important to notice when someone isn't themselves, and step in to support one another.

When I learned about Vince's work with Construction Hike for Hope and was asked to expand the event to the Northeast, I immediately saw it as an opportunity to bring people together in a new way. The Bear Mountain Construction Hike for Hope was born – a destination where participants could unplug from devices, reconnect with others, and share a day filled with meaning.

What began as a construction-driven initiative has grown into something larger. Today, Construction Hike for Hope events across the country welcome not only workers from the construction industry, but also their families, friends, veterans, neighbors, and construction industry supporters such as police officers, firefighters, and paramedics. It's become a true community gathering, uniting people across backgrounds and experiences with the purpose of encouraging the community to lean on each other and look out for each other.

At its heart, the Construction Hike for Hope is more than just an event. It's a symbol of connection, resilience, and shared responsibility. It's proof that when people come together, hope multiplies."





**LEADERSHIP
CONFERENCE
& LIFESAVERS
GALA**

Celebrating Chapter Leadership, and Honoring Contributions at the Lifesavers Gala

When it comes to doing all we can to prevent suicide – and forging a protective shell of comfort and understanding around those who have been directly affected by this leading cause of death – we are truly working together. From our national team, to our Public Policy office in Washington, D.C., to our local staff leading chapters across the country and the many impassioned and dedicated volunteers who come together – the impact we’re making is generated by a community of people who care.

Chapter Leadership Conference

In January 2025, 400 dedicated volunteers and staff gathered together in Houston for the annual Chapter Leadership Conference. The event is a chance each year for our chapters to rally around our mission, be inspired by each other, learn of the latest developments in research, public policy, and more, and align on goals centered around new programs and initiatives, such as the education program *L.E.T.S. Save Lives: An Introduction to Suicide Prevention for Black and African American Communities*, as well as the ongoing implementation of AFSP’s Construction Industry Initiative in partnership with Bechtel.

As part of the Chapter Awards Banquet, our chapters were honored with awards for outstanding work in program delivery, research, public policy, fundraising, and more, culminating with AFSP Virginia receiving the Overall Chapter of the Year Award.

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The impact
we’re making
is generated by
a community of
people who care.

36th Annual Lifesavers Gala

Each year, AFSP's Lifesavers Gala allows us to reflect back on what we've accomplished and recognize the individuals and partners who help us achieve our mission while raising funds that enable us to keep moving forward.

Hosted by Cindy Hsu, Board Member for AFSP New York City Chapter and Emmy-award winning anchor and reporter at CBS New York, the gala was held at Jazz at Lincoln Center in New York City.

Distinguished honorees for the event included:

Survivors of Suicide Loss Lifesaver Award

Eric and Terry Murray

Eric and Terry Murray launched the Grayson Murray Foundation in honor of their son, late PGA Tour player Grayson Murray, who died by suicide in May 2024 at the age of 30. The mission of the Grayson Murray Foundation is to raise awareness and support of mental health and addiction challenges faced by individuals from all walks of life.

Public Service Lifesaver Award

Jay Glazer

In *Unbreakable with Jay Glazer: A Mental Wealth Podcast* (an extension of his best-selling book "Unbreakable"),

Jay Glazer – NFL Insider for FOX Sports' award-winning NFL pregame show, FOX NFL SUNDAY, and the host of the iHeartMedia and Fox Sports Radio – shares his personal mental health journey, along with tips and tools for thriving despite mental health struggles.

Public Education Lifesaver Award

Ethan & Naomi Sacks

Ethan and Naomi Sacks are the father-daughter duo behind Image Comics' *A Haunted Girl*, a comic book series inspired by Naomi's mental health journey. Ethan and Naomi actively collaborated with AFSP on the four-issue graphic novel horror miniseries, ensuring that they wrote safely on the topic and included mental health resources.

Lifetime Achievement Research Award

Marsha Linehan, Ph.D., ABPP, Director Emeritus, Behavioral Research and Therapy Clinics & Professor Emeritus, Psychology, University of Washington

Dr. Marsha Linehan developed Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT) in the 1980s, causing a sea change as an effective intervention in behavioral therapy. This treatment was originally developed for suicidal behaviors and later expanded to treat people with borderline personality disorder and other severe mental disorders involving serious emotion dysregulation. Today, DBT is ubiquitous as a tool used in therapy to reduce suicidal behavior and is more cost effective compared to standard treatments.

Annual Research Award

Katherine Anne Comtois, Ph.D., MPH, Director, Center for Suicide Prevention and Recovery (CSPAR) & Professor, Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences, University of Washington

Dr. Kate Comtois, an AFSP scientific advisor, developed game-changing interventions transforming how clinicians approach and treat patients with suicidal thoughts, behavior, and risk. Her innovative work – including Caring Contacts, adaptations of Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT), Collaborative Assessment and Management of Suicidality (CAMS), and Preventing Addiction Related Suicide (PARS) – equipped thousands of providers with effective tools to engage with high-risk individuals and save lives across diverse clinical settings.

Thanks to this year's gala chair, Mark Baer, Partner and Immediate Past CEO at Crowe LLP.



RESEARCH GRANTS

The American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP) began as a research organization dedicated to finding the best ways to prevent suicide. Today, we are the largest private funder of suicide prevention research. Much of what is known about suicide comes from studies that AFSP has funded. Through our Innovation Research Grants, which support novel approaches to this important work, and our targeted, potentially high-impact Focus Research Grants, our studies help shape suicide prevention efforts around the world.

Research has shown that suicide can be prevented. By opening up new areas of inquiry, and funding studies across multiple disciplines at all levels of investigation, we can learn more about the causes of suicide, test promising treatments and interventions, and determine the best, most effective ways to save lives.

Key

- N Neurobiological:** How do brain structure and neurochemical function contribute to suicide?
- P Psychosocial:** What are the risk factors and warning signs for suicide?
- G Genetic:** What genetic pathways are associated with suicide risk, and can we develop biological interventions and treatments?
- T Treatment:** What treatments – like therapies and medications – are effective at reducing suicide?
- C Community:** What universal prevention programs – like hotlines, gatekeeper training, and community-based programs – are the most effective?
- S Loss Survivors:** What is the impact of suicide loss, and what helps the healing process?

Focus Grants are targeted, innovative, high-risk, potentially high-yield projects that seek to inform and even transform suicide prevention efforts.

Blue Sky Focus Grant



Cynthia Fontanella, Ph.D.
Research Institute at Nationwide
Children's Hospital

P \$1,245,919

Developing Suicide Risk Algorithms in Outpatient Care for Youth Using Machine Learning

Despite opportunities in outpatient care, many youth at risk for suicide remain unidentified due to the complexity of risk factors and limitations of traditional assessment methods. This project will apply machine learning to Medicaid claims data along with other health and social data to develop and evaluate a short-term suicide risk decision support tool to help clinicians work with youth presenting with mental health concerns. These tools will provide clinicians with actionable, patient-specific risk information, enabling proactive interventions to improve identification and outcomes for at-risk youth.



Tina Goldstein, Ph.D.
University of Pittsburgh Medical Center

T \$1,499,063

Triple Chronotherapy + Transdiagnostic Sleep and Circadian Intervention (Trans-C+) for Suicidal Young Adults

There is a pressing need for effective treatments for college students with suicidal thoughts and behaviors that yield fast-acting and sustained impact. Evidence has shown that sleep health is a promising treatment target due to its association with near-term suicide risk and possibility of improvement with treatment. Given that college students exhibit substantial sleep difficulties, this project will examine a sleep-health focused treatment package for college students with acute suicide risk that holds promise to safely and non-invasively yield rapid and sustained improvement in suicidal thoughts and behaviors.

Innovation Grants. Through the funding of Innovation Grants, AFSP supports pioneering work that will increase our understanding of suicide with an array of promising new areas of research.

Linked Standard Research Grant



Evan Kleiman, Ph.D.

Rutgers University



Matthew Nock, Ph.D.

Massachusetts General Hospital/Harvard University

T \$449,790

Group-Based Protocol for a Real-Time Emotion Management Skills Intervention for Psychiatric Inpatients at High Risk for Suicide

This study will examine the viability of a group implementation of a brief one-on-one intervention for addressing suicidal thoughts and behaviors. The intervention teaches skills to adults in the hospital who are identified with risk for suicide. The skills taught help them learn to manage distressing feelings and are paired with an app that helps them practice these skills after leaving the hospital. The intervention has been shown to be effective on an individual basis in inpatient settings. The goal is to deliver the program using a group format and examine its effectiveness.



Marie Gaine, Ph.D.

University of Iowa



Sarven Sabuncian, Ph.D.

Johns Hopkins University

N \$449,999

Brain-Relevant Molecules in the Blood

The biological basis of suicide remains incompletely understood, partly due to the inaccessibility of the brain. This study utilizes easily accessible samples from blood to study extracellular vesicles and cell-free DNA that may reflect changes in the brain that are also associated with suicide. The goal in this proposal is to further our understanding of suicidal thoughts and behaviors, and to identify molecular targets for the identification of individuals at high risk.



Jessica Peters, Ph.D.

Brown University



Jessica Schleider, Ph.D.

Northwestern University

T \$449,738

Adapting and Testing a Digital Single Session Intervention for Coping with Minority Stress for Use with Suicidal LGBTQIA+ Adolescents on Inpatient Units

LGBTQ+ adolescents are at high risk for suicide, in part due to facing many stressful experiences around their identities in day-to-day life. Up to half of adolescents hospitalized for suicide risk are LGBTQ+ and in need of additional support around LGBTQ+-specific issues. Project RISE is a digital self-guided intervention to improve resilience in LGBTQ+ youth. This project proposes to adapt Project RISE for suicide prevention use in inpatient units as a much-needed add-on treatment.



Heather Schatten, Ph.D.

Butler Hospital



A. Rani Elwy, Ph.D.

Brown University

T \$449,999

Expanding Access to Evidence-Based Suicide Risk Assessment and Intervention in a Crisis Stabilization Setting

The goal of this study is to expand access to suicide risk assessment, lethal means counseling, safety planning, and behavioral skills among patients at elevated suicide risk by implementing a tablet-based crisis app, Jaspr Health, into a crisis stabilization setting. This project will examine whether Jaspr improves satisfaction with clinical care and leads to fewer hospital readmissions, improvement in coping skills, and a reduction in suicidal thoughts and behaviors, distress, and agitation.

Distinguished Investigator Grant



Yogesh Dwivedi, Ph.D.

University of Alabama at Birmingham

G N \$139,932

Development of Novel Transdiagnostic Neural-Derived Exosomal miRNA-based Biomarkers for Suicidality

Suicide is a significant public health concern. However, the ability to predict and prevent suicidal behavior is limited. MicroRNAs representing gene expression play an essential role in conveying environmental impacts on brain function, and abnormal expression of these molecules has been linked to psychiatric disorders. Using an innovative approach (brain-derived plasma exosomes), this study will examine whether microRNAs can serve as “molecular tools” to identify suicidal behavior across diagnoses.



Marianne Goodman, M.D.

James J. Peters VA Medical Center

N \$148,671

Orexin Antagonism to Target Mechanisms of Suicide Risk: A Proof-of-Concept Clinical Trial

Orexins are brain chemicals that regulate critical functions, such as sleep and mood. This research proposal builds on exciting genetic data identifying the orexin-1 receptor as a treatment target for suicide risk. The proposed research will study the feasibility and preliminary effect of suvorexant, an orexin receptor antagonist medication currently used for insomnia, to reduce suicide risk in suicidal Veterans with major depression. The researchers will also examine the effect of suvorexant on measures of impulsivity and aggression, which are related to vulnerability to suicide.

Standard Research Grant



Sabrina Darrow, Ph.D.
University of California, San Francisco

T \$125,000

DBT-Informed Caregiver Risk Management to Achieve a Zero Suicide System: A Pilot Study

The research team developed a telehealth intervention for caregivers of youth at risk of self-harm. The current study will integrate this service into a health care system's Zero Suicide effort and test whether it is acceptable to caregivers and feasible to implement in the system. Through input from stakeholders, including experts in youth treatment and suicide prevention, and individuals with lived experience, the researchers will modify the intervention to be helpful to diverse caregivers.



Hyeouk (Chris) Hahm, Ph.D.
Boston University

S \$124,999

HEAL Study: Suicidal Thoughts, Behaviors, and Quality of Life among Suicide Bereaved Asian Americans

This HEAL (Hope and Empowerment of Asian American Loss) project focuses on the impact of suicide loss on Asian American (AA) families, exploring multiple socio-cultural risk factors including how loss of face, family roles, and beliefs influence suicidal behaviors and quality of life. By conducting interviews and surveys, this study aims to understand the unique challenges faced by bereaved AA families. Findings from this research will guide the development of culturally specific interventions to prevent suicide among suicide bereaved AAs.



Massimiliano Orri, Ph.D.
McGill University (Canada)

P \$125,000

Understanding Associations Between Irritability and Suicide-Related Outcomes: An International Study

Irritability, defined as an increased proneness to anger, is a potential risk factor for suicide-related outcomes. Pooling multiple datasets across the world, this study will use a meta-analytical approach with individual-level data to investigate associations between irritability and suicide-related outcomes, exploring variations based on participant characteristics. Findings from this research will help identify individuals at risk and potentially guide future interventions targeting irritability to reduce suicide risk.



Alexandra Pitman, Ph.D.
University College, London
(United Kingdom)

P \$125,000

Timing of Risk of Suicide and Attempted Suicide in Relation to Key Life Events

Research has shown that people who go through divorce or experience unemployment are at increased risk of suicide, but little about when they are at greatest risk in the lead-up to or aftermath of these life events. By analyzing a large population dataset, this study seeks to identify time points at which people might be most likely to struggle mentally during the process of divorce or unemployment. Findings from this research will help plan timely and appropriate mental health and suicide prevention support.



James Aluri, M.D.

Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine

Mentor: Holly Wilcox, Ph.D.

Mentor Institution: Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine

P S C \$137,797

Identifying Mechanisms and Predictors of Suicide Contagion and Exploring Postvention at US Colleges

The rates of suicidal thoughts and behaviors are rising among US college students. This project aims to improve our understanding of postvention as an organized institutional response to a death by suicide on college campuses. By linking institutional data about suicide deaths and postvention protocols to the Healthy Minds Study (a national survey of college students), and gathering perspectives from college leaders, this project will generate evidence and practical guidance for postvention efforts on college campuses in the U.S.

Early Career Researcher Grant



Elizabeth Bartlett, Ph.D.

Research Foundation for Mental Hygiene, Inc

Mentor: John Mann, M.D.

Mentor Institution: Research Foundation for Mental Hygiene, Inc

N \$140,000

Dynorphin/Kappa Opioid Receptor Signaling Role in Ketamine's Anti-Suicidal Ideation Effect

It is of interest to suicide prevention to explore how stress, suicidal thoughts, and the effects of ketamine are connected in people with depression. Stress increases the risk for suicidal thoughts, but the biological basis is unclear. Ketamine may help reduce suicidal thoughts by affecting stress-linked brain systems. This study will use smartphone tracking to monitor real-time responses to stress and positron emission tomography (PET) brain scans to study how ketamine affects brain pathways related to stress and suicidal thoughts in depressed individuals.



Madeline Benz, Ph.D.

Brown University Medical School

Mentor: Brandon Gaudiano, Ph.D.

Mentor Institution: Butler Hospital,
Brown University

T \$140,000

Development of an Intervention to Reduce Overdose Risk in Dual Diagnosis Patients

Patients with co-occurring mental health and substance use disorders are more likely to experience both intentional and unintentional overdose, especially following discharge from inpatient treatment. Suicide prevention interventions need to address overdose across the spectrum of intentionality and with additional considerations related to the influences of substance use and intoxication. Through collaboration with patients and clinicians, the researchers aim to develop and test a novel overdose-specific safety planning.



Daniel Bowling, Ph.D.

Stanford University School of Medicine

Mentor: Alan Schatzberg, M.D.

Mentor Institution: Stanford University
School of Medicine

T \$140,000

Standardized Tunable Music Medicine for Suicidality (STAMM-S)

This project integrates music neuroscience, therapy, and technology to implement Standardized Tunable Music Medicine for Suicidality (STAMM-S) as a first-of-its-kind, listening-based mobile health intervention that systematically applies music's core effects on brain reward, affect, and entrainment for suicidal thoughts and behavior in young adults. Each participant will be given access to a personalized playlist of therapeutically aligned preferred music and intuitive digital controls that provide real-time control over tempo, spectrum, and amplitude. Participants will be guided on how to match these features of music to their mood and facilitate positive shifts toward improved well-being.



Michael Bronstein, Ph.D.

University of Minnesota

Mentor: E. David Klonsky, Ph.D.

Mentor Institution: University of British Columbia (Canada)

P \$140,000

Using Data Science to Reveal Within-Person Causal Pathways to Suicide Ideation

Contributors to suicide ideation differ across people with psychosis. However, treatment often begins without determining what contributed to thoughts of suicide for someone with psychosis. Accordingly, suicide ideation and behavior often persist. This study will test an innovative machine learning method of identifying what contributed to changes in suicide ideation severity in a given individual. If successful, this method will enable more personalized and effective treatment approaches.



Sarah Brown, Ph.D.

Florida State University

Mentor: Lori Scott, Ph.D.

Mentor Institution: University of Pittsburgh

P \$139,993

Examining Mechanisms Underlying Suicidal Imagery and Near-term Fluctuations in Suicide Risk in Lab and in Daily Life

Suicidal imagery has been found to be informative about risk for suicidal behavior. This study investigates how suicidal imagery influences short-term fluctuations in suicide risk. By examining real-time affective and physiological responses, both in the lab and in daily life, the findings of this research will provide valuable insights into how, when, and for whom imagery-related processes may exacerbate suicide risk. Understanding the role of imagery-related processes in the onset and maintenance of suicide risk will directly enhance suicide risk assessments and inform targeted intervention development.



Allison Gornik, Ph.D.

Hugo W. Moser Research Institute at
Kennedy Krieger, Inc.

Mentor: Paul Lipkin, M.D.
Mentor Institution: Hugo W. Moser
Research Institute at Kennedy Krieger, Inc.

P \$139,993

Exploring Suicide Risk in Children with Neurodevelopmental Disabilities

Greater understanding of suicidal thoughts and behaviors in children with neurodevelopmental disabilities such as ADHD, autism, intellectual or learning disability is needed. By analyzing records from over 3,000 children, this project aims to identify risks linked to suicidal thoughts and behaviors, including diagnoses and personal and social factors. Findings from this research will improve suicide risk screening and treatments, ultimately informing clinicians about clinical care for children with developmental and behavioral challenges.



Alexander Hatoum, Ph.D.

Washington University at St. Louis

Mentor: Anna Docherty, Ph.D.
Mentor Institution: University of Utah

P \$140,000

Nature or Nurture Depends on the Individual: Person Specific Artificial Intelligence Suicidality Risk Models

This proposal aims to address the diversity of risk factors for suicidal thoughts and behaviors that complicate current prediction models. In particular, this project focuses on the intersection of genetic and environmental predictors, and their overlap. Explainable AI will be used to integrate various sources of information and create person-centered risk scores that include genetic models, guided by single cell molecular patterns, and environmental exposure risk factors. This approach could enable more targeted, effective intervention strategies based on personalized risk profiles.



Audreyana Jagger-Rickels, Ph.D.

The Ohio State University

Mentor: Scott Langenecker, Ph.D.

Mentor Institution: The Ohio State University

N \$140,000

The Role of the Middle Temporal Gyrus in Suicide Risk

We are learning more about the role of the brain with regard to suicide. It is possible that the middle temporal gyrus may play a role in suicide risk. Veterans with and without a history of a suicide attempt will watch an emotional film (measuring emotion disengagement/dissociation) and make self-death associations (measuring negative self-referential processing) while recording brain activity in the middle temporal gyrus. It is hypothesized that the middle temporal gyrus will be overactive in those with a history of a suicide attempt, suggesting it contributes to mechanisms that maintain suicide risk.



Jaclyn Kirshenbaum, Ph.D.

Columbia University

Mentor: David Pagliaccio, Ph.D.

Mentor Institution: Columbia University

P \$139,997

Suicide Risk in Children Post-Emergency Department Discharge: Roles of Stress, Sleep, and Negative Urgency

Stress, sleep problems, and impulsivity are prevalent in children presenting to the Emergency Department (ED) with suicidal thoughts and behavior. This project will enroll children aged eight to twelve years old who have been admitted to the ED for suicide concerns. Given prior research showing that the first three months post-discharge are particularly high risk, this study will investigate stress, sleep, and impulsive-related risk factors for suicidal thoughts and behaviors (STB) during this timeframe. These are potentially modifiable factors and available for intervention.



Su Yeon Lee-Tauler, Ph.D.

Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences

Mentor: Kimberly Van Orden, Ph.D.

Mentor Institution: University of Rochester

C \$140,000

'Wero' Faith Community Suicide Prevention Outreach and Social Engagement for Korean American Older Adults

Korean American older adults have a high suicide rate, yet no tailored suicide prevention programs exist. This project aims to leverage the Korean American church infrastructure to create a suicide-safe community and provide faith leaders with tools to enhance social connection with older adults with elevated risk. This model could support suicide prevention efforts within faith communities across the U.S., Korea, and other diverse racial/ethnic groups.



Alessia Mastrodonato, Ph.D.

Columbia University

Mentor: Mark Underwood, Ph.D.

Mentor Institution: Columbia University

N \$140,000

The Neurobiology of Suicide: Blood-Brain Barrier Breakdown as a Novel Suicide-Risk Biomarker

Elevated levels of inflammatory molecules are found in the brains of suicide decedents, even though the brain is typically protected from such agents by a blood-brain barrier (BBB). Using a translational approach, researchers will investigate the BBB breakdown as a biomarker for suicide. By identifying the BBB genes in the brains of people who died by suicide and using a mouse stress model to examine cause and effect, there's an opportunity for exploring novel therapeutics to aid individuals experiencing suicidal thoughts and behaviors.



Mina Rizk, M.D.

Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai

Mentor: James Murrough, M.D., Ph.D.

Mentor Institution: Icahn School of
Medicine at Mount Sinai

N T \$140,000

Immune Mechanisms Underlying The Rapid Anti-suicidal Effects of Electroconvulsive Therapy and Ketamine

Electroconvulsive therapy (ECT) and intravenous ketamine are two effective treatments for individuals suffering from depression and an acute suicidal crisis. Abnormalities of the immune system are linked to suicide risk and can be modulated by ECT and ketamine. This study aims to understand if the biological effects of ECT and ketamine on the immune system are related to their clinical effects on suicidal thoughts in people with major depression.



Megan Rogers, Ph.D.

Texas State University

Mentor: Michael Armev, Ph.D.

Mentor Institution: Brown University,
Butler Hospital

P \$140,000

Assessing Warning Signs for Suicide in Intensive Longitudinal Designs: Development and Validation of a Brief Measure

Warning signs for suicide have been widely disseminated. However, assessment of these warning signs has been hindered by the lack of a validated self-report instrument. This study uses a multiphase approach to developing and validating a self-report measure of warning signs for suicide, including item generation and refinement based on feedback from those with professional and lived experience and evaluation of the resulting scale's structure, reliability, and validity in a sample of adults with suicidal thoughts.



Katherine Sarkisian, Ph.D.

The Research Institute at Nationwide Children’s Hospital

Mentor: Jennifer Hughes, Ph.D.
Mentor Institution: The Research Institute at Nationwide Children’s Hospital

T \$139,997

***Safety Plans for Elementary-Aged Kids (SPEAK):
A Feasibility Trial***

Approximately 13% of nine- and ten-year-olds in the United States have had thoughts about killing themselves. The lack of suicide prevention approaches that are specialized for elementary-aged children is a significant public health concern. This project is focused on developing and testing specialized safety plans for children (ages seven to eleven) who experience suicidal thoughts or behaviors. This approach will also be designed to help caregivers support their child’s safety and healthy coping.



Kaitlyn Schuler, Ph.D.

University of North Carolina, Wilmington

Mentor: Jo Robinson, MA
Mentor Institution: University of Melbourne (Australia)

P \$140,000

***Daily Experiences of Minority Stress, Social Media Use,
and Suicidality in LGBTQ+ Emerging Adults***

This study examines daily experiences of minority stress, social media use, connectedness and suicidal thoughts and behaviors in LGBTQ+ emerging adults who are at high risk of suicide. The research team will work with a youth advisory team to ensure the relevance and safety of study procedures and enhance participant engagement. Findings from this proposal could inform mobile interventions for LGBTQ+ youth suicidal thoughts and behaviors.



Amelia Stanton, Ph.D.

Boston University

Mentor: Richard Liu, Ph.D.

Mentor Institution: Massachusetts General Hospital, Harvard Medical School

P \$140,000

Identifying Sexual and Gender Minority Youth at Increased Risk for Suicidality to Inform a Systems-Level Intervention: A Data Mining Approach

This study will apply a novel statistical approach to medical record data to identify subgroups of sexual and gender minority youth and young adults with intersecting factors that are associated with increased risk for suicidal ideation. The research team will also hold focus groups with sexual and gender minority youth patients at increased risk for suicidal ideation and with primary care providers to explore barriers to accessing prevention services and preferences for a risk-reduction intervention.



Danielle Steelesmith, Ph.D.

The Research Institute at Nationwide Children's Hospital

Mentor: Cynthia Fontanella, Ph.D.

Mentor Institution: The Research Institute at Nationwide Children's Hospital

C \$140,000

The Effects of Individual and Bundled Public Health Policies on Suicide Rates among Youth and Emerging Adults in Rural America

Examining the influence of public policy on county-level suicide rates among youth and emerging adults (ages ten to 29 years) across geographic location is of great importance. Policies related to social welfare (e.g., TANF/SNAP, EITC, child tax credits), firearms (e.g., safe storage, red flag laws, background checks), and drug and alcohol (e.g., prescribing limits, taxes, age restrictions) will be studied alone and in combination to determine if there are differences between rural and urban location, as well as within rural locations, in their impact on suicide among youth and emerging adults.



Mallory Stephenson, Ph.D.

Virginia Commonwealth University

Mentor: Alexis Edwards, Ph.D.

Mentor Institution: Virginia Commonwealth University

S \$137,673

Investigating the Impact of Adolescent Suicide Attempt and Death on Parents and Siblings

Adolescent suicidal behavior can be a stressful and traumatic experience for the entire family, and it is important to understand when and under what conditions family members are most affected. This study will evaluate the effect of adolescent suicide attempts and death by suicide on the potential risk for mental disorders and suicidal behavior among parents and siblings. This work could inform the development of more effective outreach efforts following an adolescent's suicide attempt or death by suicide.

Postdoctoral Fellowship



Ophélie Collet, Ph.D., MPH

Université de Montréal (Canada)

Mentor: Annette Erlangsen, Ph.D.

Mentor Institution: Mental Health Centre, Copenhagen (Denmark)

T P \$140,000

Maternal Psychotropic Medication Use in Pregnancy and Offspring Suicidal Behavior: A Register-Based Target Trial Emulation

Psychotropic medications can effectively treat maternal mental health conditions, but there is concern that their use during pregnancy might affect a child's neurodevelopment. This study uses data from 1.7 million people in Denmark to examine whether these medications during pregnancy influence children's risk of suicidal behavior and whether stopping them increases mothers' risk of suicidal behavior. By mimicking clinical trials using causal inference methods, this research aims to guide safer treatment decisions during pregnancy for mothers and their children.



Devon Watts, Ph.D.

Massachusetts General Hospital,
Harvard Medical School

Mentor: Jordan Smoller, M.D., Sc.D.
Mentor Institution: Massachusetts General
Hospital, Harvard Medical School

G T \$140,000

Identifying Novel Therapeutic Targets for Suicide Prevention through Multi-Omic Analysis and Drug Repurposing

Despite advances in suicide prevention, current methods to assess risk and treat suicidal behavior have significant limitations. This study aims to improve suicide prevention in two ways. First, by combining genetic and medical records data in order to better identify individuals at risk. Second, by understanding the biological pathways involved in suicide risk. Findings could help determine which, if any, existing FDA-approved medications could be most effective as treatment options for suicide prevention.



Wenjing Wei, M.D.

Shanghai Mental Health Center (China)

Mentor: Howard Aizenstein, M.D., Ph.D.
Mentor Institution: University of Pittsburgh

P \$140,000

Computational Approach to Understanding the Risk Architecture of Suicidal Thoughts and Behaviors in Older Adults

Using advanced AI to analyze brain MRI data, patterns that signal suicide risk in older adults as well as patients with depression and increased suicide risk will be explored. This innovative approach, merging psychiatry with computer science, aims to revolutionize suicide prevention and care for the elderly, addressing a pressing health challenge in an aging global population.

Pilot Research Grant



Elizabeth Edershile, Ph.D.
Rutgers University

P \$50,000

Narcissism, Affect Regulation, and Suicide Risk

Some individuals report that thinking about suicide can temporarily relieve intense negative feelings. This might also apply to those with pathological narcissism, where suicidal thoughts help lessen feelings of intense shame. This study will examine how pathological narcissism is associated with suicidal thinking in real time. Further, the research team will assess for entitlement-based thoughts of suicide to see if there is a correlation with high-risk periods.



Deborah Tyndall, Ph.D., RN
University of North Carolina, Wilmington

T \$49,766

Understanding Associations Between Irritability and Suicide-Related Outcomes: An International Study

School nurses are well positioned to identify students at risk, yet prior research has shown that they are often excluded from school-based suicide prevention programs. This project will establish the feasibility and acceptability of a school nurse suicide risk screening intervention for youth in two public school districts in rural North Carolina. This pilot study will provide insights on the effectiveness of the intervention and how to tailor the intervention for implementation throughout the state.



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Personal Campaigns

Coast-2-Coast 20th
Anniversary
James Marks

ATO Walks Hard 2025
ATO Kappa Lambda

Rays of Hope: An Easter
Benefit Concert
Landon Ollerton

Pedaling for Prevention
Michael Quigley
Chris' Marathon for Suicide
Prevention
Chris Carmon

2025 Cheverly Dolphins
Swim-A-Thon in Memory
of Zach Misleh
KalMarie Rawald

Quail Creek-Team Andrew
Out of the Darkness
Fundraising Walk
Perri Jones

Why Suffer Alone? 2025
Challenge
Jessica Schulz

Horizon Memos
Alexis Kaiser

Lift for Lives
Lyndsay DeLuca

Pedaling for Prevention '25
Nicholas Wylie

Sigma Pi Fundraiser For
Suicide Prevention
Sigma Pi

Memorial Funds

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