

Introducing **SPEAK**



SPEAK is an information kit for the public, health care providers and educators to help them understand the terrible frequency and toll of suicide, and to discover ways and methods to aid in preventing it.



SPEAK Suicide Prevention Education Awareness Kit

New York State
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MANY PEOPLE ARE SHOCKED TO LEARN just how prevalent suicide is in our nation today. It is alarming to learn that more people die from suicides than from homicides in our country every year. It is now the 11th leading cause of death for all Americans, but suicide is the 3rd cause of death for young people aged 15-24. According to the Federal Center for Disease Control, more teenagers and young adults died in 1999 from suicide than from cancer, heart disease, AIDS, birth defects, stroke and chronic lung disease combined.

Suicide is a serious public mental health challenge. The good news is that suicides are preventable, if people know what to look for and when to speak up. To that end, the New York State Office of Mental Health is distributing Suicide Prevention Education and Awareness Kits or SPEAK, and launching a statewide public education and awareness program that is a part of New York's larger suicide prevention effort.

Research has shown that suicide prevention and early intervention efforts are successful at saving lives. SPEAK is designed to give New Yorkers the information they need in order to help themselves, their friends, loved ones, neighbors and others.

We have gathered the most current scientific knowledge available about suicide prevention, the risk factors and the warning signs, included resources and related information about how to seek help and how to help others, and assembled Suicide Prevention Education and Awareness Kits and information for distribution across the State.

We encourage all New Yorkers to become familiar with the risks and warning signs of suicide. Speak up if you are troubled, and listen closely to loved ones who speak to you when they are in pain. Help is available, treatment is effective and lives can be saved. By learning when, where and how to speak up and seek help for oneself or others, we can take the first step in preventing suicide in New York State.





What is SPEAK?

SPEAK is a statewide public awareness and education program that is part of New York's larger suicide prevention effort. It includes information designed to help you become aware of the facts about suicide, help you become familiar with its warning signs, and show you how to help someone who may be considering suicide. By speaking up, we can all help to save lives in New York.

Why does New York need a program like SPEAK?

The statistics about suicide are staggering:

- Approximately 1,300 New Yorkers take their own lives each year, and it is estimated that for every suicide death, there are anywhere from 8-25 suicide attempts. (NYS Dept. of Health)
- The number of New Yorkers who lost their lives to suicide in 2000 and 2001 exceeds the number of New Yorkers who lost their lives to the World Trade Center disaster. (NYC Dept. of Health and Mental Hygiene)
- Approximately 150,000 New York teenagers attempt suicide each year, and 70 will die as a result. (Center for Disease Control)

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- Suicide is now the third leading cause of death among young New Yorkers ages 15-24. (National Center for Health Statistics)
- In New York State and nationally, deaths by suicide outnumber deaths by homicide. (NYS Dept. of Health, National Institute of Mental Health)
- The national rate of teen suicide has nearly tripled since the 1950's. (Center for Disease Control's National Center for Injury Prevention and Control)
- Nationally, there is an average of one suicide among the elderly every 90 minutes. (From the National Strategy for Suicide Prevention)

As you can see, suicide is a serious public mental health challenge. But the good news is that suicide is preventable. By becoming aware of the scope and dimensions of suicide, by learning to recognize the warning signs, and by learning when to speak up to get help, you can become part of the prevention solution. By speaking up, we can save lives.

What does this kit include?

The Suicide Prevention Education and Awareness Kit includes information to help everyone to understand the terrible frequency and toll of suicide, and to discover ways and methods to help prevent it. There is information about suicide and





suicide prevention, the risk factors and the warning signs, resources about how to seek help for yourself or how to help others, and lots of other information, including a poster. The kits include specific information about men and depression; women and depression; older adults, depression and suicide; teens depression and suicide; facts about suicide; telephone hotlines across the state and more.

Who is SPEAK for? How can I use a kit?

SPEAK is for everyone. The kits contain information everyone can use to help their families and loved ones, friends, colleagues and peers.

What should I do if I suspect that someone needs help?

If a friend or loved one seems troubled, encourage that person to speak to someone who can help, such as a family physician, school counselor, religious leader, therapist, or staff person at a crisis hotline.

If someone is suicidal, he or she should not be left alone. Try to get the person

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to seek help immediately from his or her doctor or the nearest hospital emergency room, or call 911. It is also important to limit the person's access to firearms, medications, or other lethal methods for suicide.

In addition to suicide prevention, are there any other goals of the SPEAK program?

The primary goal of the SPEAK education and awareness campaign is to reduce suicide in New York State. But the program also has the important second goal of reducing the stigma associated with getting help for emotional problems or mental illness. Stigma frequently surrounds mental illness, so many people try to hide their symptoms and avoid getting treatment out of fear of embarrassment. It is important for all New Yorkers to know that mental illnesses can be successfully treated, and that recovery is possible. But we need to speak up before recovery can occur.

For more information, write or call the Office of Mental Health Community Outreach & Public Education Office, 44 Holland Avenue, Albany NY 12229, 866-270-9857 (English only, toll free), or visit the SPEAK website at www.speakny.org



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LIFELINE™

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www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org
**Help is available for you or
someone you care about, 24-7**

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