



Barry-Eaton District Health Department

Be Active • Be Safe • Be Healthy

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September is National Suicide Prevention Awareness Month

Suicide can touch anyone, regardless of age, gender, race, or background. In the United States, suicide is the tenth leading cause of death overall, and the second leading cause of death for individuals between the ages of 10 and 34. However, suicide remains a stigmatized topic, which can prevent individuals experiencing suicidal thoughts from receiving the help they need. Suicide is preventable, and this September the Barry-Eaton District Health Department is observing National Suicide Prevention Awareness Month. Additionally, September 8th-14th is National Suicide Prevention Week, and September 10th is World Suicide Prevention Day.

Many people know someone who has experienced suicidal thoughts, or have had suicidal thoughts themselves. In the State of Michigan in 2017, 1,405 individuals died by suicide. For the 2017-2018 Michigan Profile for Healthy Youth Survey, 7th, 9th, and 11th grade students were asked if they had seriously considered a suicide attempt. In Barry County, 29.9% of middle school students and 20.3% of high school students reported considering an attempt. In Eaton County, 25.5% of middle school students and 23.3% of high school students reported considering an attempt.

If you are speaking with someone who is experiencing suicidal thoughts, these five steps can help:

1. **Ask.** Ask the question, "Are you thinking about suicide?" Make sure to listen to their answer seriously and without judgment.
2. **Keep them safe.** If someone is having suicidal thoughts, try and figure out if they have a plan. If they have a plan, try to remove their access to items they might use. Take additional steps, like calling authorities or driving them to the emergency department if necessary.
3. **Be There.** Be a present and supportive listener.
4. **Help them connect.** Help them explore safety plans, social supports, and mental health professionals.
5. **Follow up.** Make sure to check back in to share your ongoing support.

If you or a loved one is thinking about suicide, there's help available. The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline provides 24/7, free, confidential support if you call **1-800-273-8255** or chat online at <https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/>. If there is an emergency, call **911** immediately. Additional information about suicide can be found at <https://www.samhsa.gov/find-help/suicide-prevention>, <https://www.nami.org/get-involved/awareness-events/suicide-prevention-awareness-month>, and <http://www.bethe1to.com/>.