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Suicide rates highest in three decades

Kym Klass, Montgomery Advertiser 8:41 p.m. CDT September 12, 2016



(Photo: Ben Goode, Getty Images/Hemera)

With the nation seeing the highest suicide rate in three decades, it can be a complexity understood only in numbers.

And even those are difficult to grasp.

There were an average 117 suicides every day in the United States in 2014, with increases in every age group except for older adults. The number of women who killed themselves rose significantly, according to a recent study through the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/products/databriefs/db241.htm\)](http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/products/databriefs/db241.htm).



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['Every situation is different' — depression affects all](#)

[\(http://www.montgomeryadvertiser.com/story/news/local/alabama/2014/08/13/every-situation-different-depression-affects/13989191/\)](http://www.montgomeryadvertiser.com/story/news/local/alabama/2014/08/13/every-situation-different-depression-affects/13989191/)

"The numbers are going up," said Wanda Laird, executive director of the National Alliance of Mental Illness office in Montgomery. "Overall, people are not seeking treatment quickly enough. Number two, sometimes it's a long wait to schedule appointments. And, the lack of Medicaid expansion could be another factor in seeking help quickly enough."

In Alabama, 719 people died by suicide in 2013, according to the Alabama Department of Public Health's 2015 Suicide Fact Sheet. It is the 11th leading cause of death in the state.

It is estimated about 90 percent of people who die by suicide experience mental illness, according to NAMI. Suicide can also come as a result of intoxication, substance abuses, a history of trauma or prolonged stress.

"It takes everyone working together to help someone on the road to recovery," Laird said of those living with mental illnesses. "We want to give someone hope and inspiration on the road to recovery. Because recovery is possible."

By the numbers

There were 42,773 people in the U.S. who took their life in 2014, compared to 29,199 in 1999. With more than 100 million annual suicide attempts, the suicide rate rose by 2 percent a year starting in 2006 in the U.S. It is the No. 2 leading cause of death in ages 10 through 34 and is the 10th leading cause of death, according to the CDC's [National Vital Statistics System of the National Center for Health Statistics \(http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/products/databriefs/db241.htm\)](http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/products/databriefs/db241.htm).

Heart disease ranks the highest with 614,348 deaths in 2014, according to the study.

The overall suicide rate rose by 24 percent from 1999 to 2014, according to the National Center for Health Statistics, and as reported in the *New York Times*.

The increases lifted the nation's suicide rate to 13 per 100,000 people, the highest since 1986.

From 1999 through 2014, the age-adjusted suicide rate in the United States increased 24 percent, from 10.5 to 13.0 per 100,000 population, with the pace of increase greater after 2006.

Suicide rates increased from 1999 through 2014 for both males and females and for all ages 10 years old to 74 years old.



The percent increase in suicide rates for females was greatest for those aged 10 years old to 14 years old, and for males, those aged 45 years old to 64 years old.

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The **TOUGH DOWNSHIP** http://offers.montgomeryadvertiser.com/specialoffers?gps_source=BF&utm_medium=overlay&utm_source=BOUNCE-EXCHANGE&utm_campaign=SEPTEMBER&utm_content=NANOBAR from Bounce-Exchange for females (34.1 percent).

Percentages of suicides attributable to suffocation increased for both sexes between 1999 and 2014.



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Seminar stresses importance of discussing suicide

[http://www.montgomeryadvertiser.com/story/news/2016/02/02/igniting-movement-suicide-discussion/79697922/?from=global&sessionKey=&autologin=\)](http://www.montgomeryadvertiser.com/story/news/2016/02/02/igniting-movement-suicide-discussion/79697922/?from=global&sessionKey=&autologin=)

Help in the River Region

"We have support groups for individuals living with mental illness, as well as for family members so that they have a built-in support system so (they) can help look for those signs of others who become very depressed and suicidal," Laird has said. "If left untreated, then it gets worse."

Reaching out to those who need help is the goal of the Montgomery Area Mental Health Authority. It is the desire of the authority to see better access to care for anyone suffering from a mental illness.

"I want to see them get the help when they need it," said Henry Parker, executive director of the MAMHA. "We're set up to where we can get them set up with what they need very quickly."



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Erasing the stigma of mental illness

<http://www.montgomeryadvertiser.com/story/life/2016/03/28/erasing-stigma-mental-illness/82325446/>

NAMI recently completed a training session for its "connection support group," which is designed for people living with a mental illness.

"They are held by people who have mental illnesses," Laird said of the groups. "Once they understand someone else has had the same thoughts and feelings, it lets them know they're not alone. It gives them someone to lean on. Peer support is very important for individuals."

NAMI also offers a peer-to-peer class.

"These people are sharing their experiences with their peers who are also working on recovery," Laird said. "They are gaining insight on how to cope with their different circumstances. They're learning to identify their thoughts and behaviors ... they learn how to be an active participant of their own treatment plan."

To help identify, understand and respond to a variety of mental health situations, a training class is being offered to help take the fear and hesitation out of starting conversations about mental health and substance abuse problems.

The Healthy Minds Network, which is the Collective Impact initiative of Envision 2020 in partnership with SummaSource at Auburn Montgomery, announced last month the availability of instructor certification training in Mental Health First Aid (MHFA).

The eight-hour training course gives participants the skills needed to provide initial help and support to someone who has a mental health or substance use problem or is experiencing a crisis.

"It will bring instructors to our communities who can then train people in our community so they can be more aware of what the signs and symptoms of mental health are so they can respond to a mental health crisis," Alana Barranco, a consultant with SummaSource at Auburn Montgomery, has said.

At MAMHA, licensed therapists are available around the clock. And with 40 crisis beds available through the mental health authority, they are constantly available for evaluations, meeting patients at hospitals, helping to line up therapy sessions and with medications as needed. On a routine basis, they see

between three and 10 people per week at the Jackson Hospital emergency room who claim to be suicidal, Parker said.



"And if they claim to be suicidal, we have to take it seriously, because you never know," he said. "We have seen an increase in the number of women that have been suicidal. It has been a significant increase since January 1. Everybody is different. They all have different reasons.

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"Some are saying they didn't have an opportunity to take care of themselves. They can't take care of themselves. They're saying they're fed up with living. Those are the ones you really have to be careful with because they will do it, real quick."



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Mental Illness: 'No matter what, you remain for a purpose'

(<http://www.montgomeryadvertiser.com/story/news/2016/03/25/mental-illness-no-matter-what-you-remain-purpose/82136868/>)

Did you know?

September is National Suicide Awareness Month, which helps promote resources and awareness around the issues of suicide prevention, how you can help others and how to talk about suicide without increasing the risk of harm.

Help, locally

Family Guidance Center: 270-4100

Montgomery Area Mental Health Authority: online at www.mamha.org, or call 24-Hour Emergency Services 334-279-7830, toll free at 1-877-279-7830, and deaf interpreter TTY at 271-2855

National Alliance on Mental Illness: online at www.NAMIAlabama.org or call 396-4797 or toll free at 1-800-626-4199.

Need to talk?

The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-TALK (8255)

Online crisis chat room: <http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org/GetHelp/LifelineChat.aspx>

NAMIWalk

The annual NAMIWalk 5K is on Sept. 24 at the Winton Blount Cultural Park. Registration is from 8 a.m. until 8:30 a.m., and the walk begins at 9 a.m. For more information, visit online at <http://www.namialabama.org>

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