

Youth Leadership: A Key to Suicide Prevention in Converse County, WY

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Hypothesis

- Creating a youth-led suicide prevention coalition will reduce the suicide rate and increase help-seeking behaviors among youth in Converse County, WY



Douglas, WY, is the seat of the county and where almost half the county population lives

Background

- Converse County: 13,809 (2023 estimate)
- Converse County all-ages suicide rate is similar to the state all-ages suicide rate
- The youth suicide rate was 35.0/100,000 persons compared to the state rate of 19.7/100,000 persons

Community Profile / Assets

- Grace to Live and Converse County Connection are organizations working to reduce suicide and substance misuse in Converse County
- The Converse County Prevention Specialist recently partnered with school counselors to start a risk reduction program in the Douglas and Glenrock high schools



Converse County Connection, Grace to Live, and the Wyoming Community Prevention Unit are involved in ongoing suicide prevention programs in Converse County.

- The prevention specialist recently completed a project with the local 4-H club in which high school aged members designed stickers to raise awareness of mental health

Integrated Review

- Suicide is the second leading cause of death in 10-34 year-olds
- Despite an increase in youth suicide prevention programs, the suicide rate has continued to rise
- Youth-led suicide programs often focus on the reduction of risk factors and how to build resiliency, which are both upstream approaches
- Educating parents and teachers on suicide has not been found to reduce suicide attempts, but educating youth has been found to reduce suicidal behavior for at least a year
- Youth members have been able to implement their projects in their schools with the help of their school counselors
- Much of the research on youth leadership in suicide prevention is qualitative and focused on the experience of youth members rather than on the impact on community-wide suicide rate

Conclusions

- Converse County Connection has operated as a suicide prevention group for many years and would act as a partner for a youth council
- The Converse County Prevention Specialist and Grace to Live have funding to go towards projects that come out of the council
- Suicide is a topic which members could find stressful and upsetting to discuss
- Council members can be prepared for this in training and manage ongoing stress through regular individual debriefings with adult council members



Glenrock, WY is the second main population center of Converse County