



STATE OF MICHIGAN

GRETCHEN WHITMER  
GOVERNOR

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES  
LANSING

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## **Governor Whitmer, MDHHS urge open and honest conversations about suicide as part of National Suicide Prevention Week**

LANSING, Mich. – As part of [National Suicide Prevention Week, Sept. 5-11](#), Gov. Gretchen Whitmer and the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) are encouraging Michiganders to have open, honest and direct conversations about suicide and how to seek help in times of need.

“This Suicide Prevention Month, we recommit ourselves to reducing the number of lives lost to suicide by employing best practices, increasing community involvement, and talking openly and honestly about suicide,” said Governor Whitmer. “Suicide is preventable and mental illness is treatable, and talking with family, friends and neighbors about this important topic is essential as we try to get help to those who need it.”

Although preliminary data for 2020 shows a reduction in suicide deaths, from 1,471 in 2019 to 1,284 in 2020, suicide was the tenth leading cause of death in both Michigan and the nation in 2019. Michigan has higher rates of suicide among those 10 to 19 and 25 to 44 years of age compared to the nation as a whole, and the highest suicide rate in the state was among older age adults ages 75 to 79 years.

MDHHS, the Michigan Association for Suicide Prevention and numerous other organizations have been working tirelessly to provide resources and implement programs that address the issue and help prevent suicide deaths. The [Michigan Suicide Prevention Commission](#) has been established to examine causes and solutions to the rising rates of suicide in the state and Michigan’s federally funded Transforming Youth Suicide Prevention Program and Preventing Suicide in Michigan Men Program are committed to lowering the suicide rate among youth, young adults and adult men.

“Suicide is a major public health concern across Michigan, and support and coordination are needed at all levels,” said Elizabeth Hertel, MDHHS director. “This past year has been especially challenging due to the COVID-19 pandemic and there are a number of stressors facing Michiganders of all ages. Learning the warning signs of suicide can help raise awareness about suicide prevention and provide loved ones with the proper help.”

Warning signs for those at risk of suicide include:

- Feelings of hopelessness.
- Threatening to or talking about wanting to hurt oneself.
- Loss of interest in activities.
- Withdrawal from friends and family.
- Change in eating and sleeping habits.
- Talking about being a burden to others.
- Increasing the use of alcohol or drugs.
- Displaying extreme mood swings.
- Looking for a way to kill oneself.

If you are in a crisis, or know someone who needs help, contact the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 800-273-TALK (8255) or visit the [MDHHS Suicide Prevention website](#) for more information.

Additional emotional-support services for those who are feeling emotional distress during the COVID-19 pandemic are available at [Michigan.gov/StayWell](#) or by calling the Michigan Stay Well Counseling via the COVID-19 Hotline at 888-535-6136 and pressing “8” to talk to a counselor 24/7.

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