



**Written Testimony of the New York State Department of Health  
Before the Senate Standing Committee on Mental Health and Developmental  
Disabilities and the Senate Standing Committee on Health  
Suicide and Suicide Prevention  
Tuesday, June 4<sup>th</sup>, 2019**

Honorable Members of the Senate:

Thank you for the opportunity to share information with the Committee on Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities and the Committee on Health.

Suicides and self-harm injuries are a growing public health concern across the State. They can have serious and lasting effects on the well-being of families and communities. An important part of suicide and self-harm injury prevention efforts is understanding trends, along with regional and demographic differences.

Clear and accurate data is essential to supporting suicide prevention activities. The New York State Department of Health's (the Department) efforts in this area are focused on data surveillance, a key tool in injury prevention. Data surveillance systems are used to identify at-risk populations, predict patterns, and recognize risk factors.

As part of data reporting efforts, the Department created a Suicide and Self Harm Dashboard, which is a collaboration between the Bureau of Health Care Analytics, Vital Statistics Program, and the Bureau of Occupational Health and Injury Prevention. Dashboard

data sources include vital statistics mortality data and New York State Statewide Planning and Research Cooperative (SPARCS) hospital discharge data.

The dashboard displays suicide and self-harm injuries in different ways and can be used to drive interventions at the local, regional, and state levels and to assist suicide education and prevention efforts<sup>1</sup>.

The Department also published a comprehensive report describing patterns in suicides and self-inflicted injuries, comparing New York City (NYC) with the rest of New York State (NYS) by sex, age and race/ethnicity, for the years 2000-2014<sup>2</sup>. The report indicated that suicides are the second leading cause of death due to injuries among all age groups in the State. In 2014, suicide was the third leading cause of all deaths in NYS among residents aged 10-14, the second leading cause among residents aged 15-34, the fourth among residents aged 35-54, and the tenth leading cause among residents aged 55-64. In 2014, there were 1,639 suicides in NYS, of which approximately 32% occurred in NYC. While the rate of suicides in NYC has remained relatively stable over the years, the rate in the rest of the state outside of NYC has seen a 27% increase since 2000.

The Prevention Agenda 2019-2024 is New York State's health improvement plan, the blueprint for state and local action to improve the health and well-being of all New Yorkers and to promote health equity in all populations who experience disparities. The Prevention Agenda includes priority areas, with priority-specific action plans, which were developed collaboratively with input from community stakeholders.

Each priority-specific action plan includes focus areas, goals, objectives, and measures for evidence-based interventions to monitor impacts. These objectives will be tracked on the New York State Prevention Agenda Dashboard<sup>3</sup>. The Prevention Agenda Action Plans provide communities with recommended evidence-based interventions, practices, and guidance to

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<sup>1</sup> <https://nyshc.health.ny.gov/web/nyapd/suicides-in-new-york>

<sup>2</sup> [https://www.health.ny.gov/statistics/prevention/injury\\_prevention/docs/sii\\_suicidenys.pdf](https://www.health.ny.gov/statistics/prevention/injury_prevention/docs/sii_suicidenys.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> [https://webbi1.health.ny.gov/SASStoredProcess/guest?\\_program=/EBVPHIG/apps/dashboard/pa\\_dashboard&p=s\\_h](https://webbi1.health.ny.gov/SASStoredProcess/guest?_program=/EBVPHIG/apps/dashboard/pa_dashboard&p=s_h)

support implementation. The plans highlight interventions that address social determinants of health, promote health equity across communities, and support healthy and active aging.

One of the priority-specific action plans of the Agenda is mental health and substance use disorder prevention, including suicide prevention. The New York State Office of Mental Health and the New York State Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services have been Prevention Agenda partners since 2013 and we are working collaboratively with them in this action plan.

The Department remains committed to continuing our work with other relevant agencies and stakeholders to prevent suicide risk before it occurs and to reduce the number of suicides in New York State. Thank you again for the opportunity to share this information.