



Hope, Heart, Healing:

The Impact of Suicide on
Families

- ❖ In 2010, **Alaska's rate was 22.6 suicides per 100,000 people.**, nearly twice the national average.
- ❖ **Alaska had 1,389 suicides between 2001 and 2010** - an average of 139 deaths by suicide per year.
- ❖ In 2010, **79% of suicides in Alaska were by men** and 21% were committed by women.
- ❖ Alaska Native men between the ages of 15-24 have the highest rate of suicide among any demographic in the country, with an average of **141.6 suicides per 100,000 each year between 2000 and 2009.**
- ❖ Youth who are exposed to suicide or suicidal behaviors are more at-risk for attempting suicide, according to the American Association of Suicidology.

Data



Risk Factors for Suicide

Warning Signs

These are common warning signs that someone is at risk of suicide:

- ❖ Threatening to hurt or kill him or herself, or talking about wanting to hurt or kill him or herself.
- ❖ Looking for ways to kill himself or herself by seeking access to firearms, pills or medications, or other means.
- ❖ Talking or writing about death, dying or suicide when these actions are out of the ordinary for the person.
- ❖ Acting recklessly or engaging in risky activities — seemingly without thinking.
- ❖ Experiencing dramatic mood changes.
- ❖ Expressing feelings of purposeless or seeing no reason for living.

Information is from the American Association of Suicidology

Risk Factors

The people most at risk of committing suicide are those who:

- ❖ Have attempted suicide in the past;
- ❖ Feel hopeless, worthless, trapped or intolerably alone;
- ❖ Have become isolated from friends, family, society and support systems;
- ❖ Have been exposed to the suicide of another person;
- ❖ Have increased their use of alcohol or are binge drinkers;
- ❖ Have a history of violent behavior;
- ❖ Are not receiving the mental health care they need; and/or
- ❖ Have a firearm or other means in the home.

Research also indicates that people subjected to bullying, familial or social rejection, and/or discrimination are at higher risk.

Information is from the American Association of Suicidology

Precipitating Events

For some people – but not all people – suicide risk is increased by certain events/experiences:

- ❖ Terminal illness and/or chronic pain;
- ❖ Physical or emotional trauma, whether directly experienced or witnessed;
- ❖ Death of a loved one, especially if by suicide;
- ❖ Divorce or loss of a romantic relationship;
- ❖ A failure at school or work;
- ❖ Criminal charge, arrest, or conviction;
- ❖ Financial loss or loss of a job;
- ❖ A loss of something intensely desired (goal, prize, object).



Impact of Suicide

Families and communities that experience a loss to suicide grieve like with any other death. However, there also comes:

Blame
Shame
Anger
Stigma
Judgment

Grief is a unique and individual process. “It takes as long as it takes” – which can sometimes come into conflict with cultural values and norms. Some survivors experience flashbacks, hyper-vigilance, depression, withdrawal, etc.

Anniversaries, birthdays, etc. can be especially hard. Survivors of a loss to suicide need support to honor these times in a way that helps them most.

Life does go on and hearts heal. This can, however, result in renewed feelings of grief and loss.

How do you answer? "Are you married?" "Do you have siblings?" "How many children do you have?" "Where's your mom/dad?"

When a survivor remarries, how does the new spouse fit in?

Siblings may wonder if they are as valuable/loved as the sibling who died by suicide.

How do you share memories of the person who died by suicide without causing distress?

Funerals and memorial services can be difficult for families and communities that experience a loss to suicide.

Religious and cultural practices may prevent the usual form of funeral or memorial. Communities may be unwilling to help with funeral costs, due to the nature of the death, even though it is a usual custom to pitch in to help.

Obituaries and funeral announcements can be delicate, given the nature of the death. Safe messaging must be balanced with acknowledging the loss.

Ministers and officiants may feel unprepared to hold a service for someone who dies by suicide. Schools and organizations may not know how to safely honor the life without glamorizing the death.



Resources & Supports

Resources for how to support families and communities and to respond safely are available:

Postvention Toolkit from the Statewide Suicide Prevention Council and Division of Behavioral Health (online at StopSuicideAlaska.org)

Survivors Support Groups, in person and online

American Foundation for Suicide Prevention afsp.org

Anchorage Survivors Support Group, acpm.org

local Hospice organizations

Forget Me Not Grief Program, Anchorage (youth)

Statewide Suicide Prevention Council
907-465-6518

Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium
907-729-3751





if The **Jason Foundation**[®]

The Jason Foundation, Inc. (JFI) was founded in 1997 by Clark Flatt after the tragic suicide of his youngest son Jason. JFI uses education as a tool to create awareness and to provide the information and resources for identification and support of at-risk youth.

Our Mission

The Jason Foundation, Inc. is dedicated to the prevention of the "Silent Epidemic" of youth suicide through educational and awareness programs to equip young people, educators/youth workers, and parents with the tools and resources to help identify and assist at-risk youth.

Reaching Alaskans

JFI opened an affiliate office at North Star Behavioral Health in September, 2011. The affiliate office supports trained JFI representatives who are available to connect individuals and communities with JFI resources.

Triangle of Prevention



Youth

- B1 Project
- "A Promise for Tomorrow" (School)
- Faith-based Program (Church youth group /Christian-based schools)



Parents

- Youth Suicide Prevention Seminar for Parents and Communities
- Parent resource program (on-line)
- Project Hug

Educators/Youth Workers

- Staff Development Modules (on-line and in DVD format)
- Suicide Awareness and Prevention for the College Campus

if The Jason Foundation[®]

For more information, please refer to the website:

www.jasonfoundation.com

To reach a JFI representative in Alaska, Contact: Ann Schaack, Representative

264-4304 (direct) or

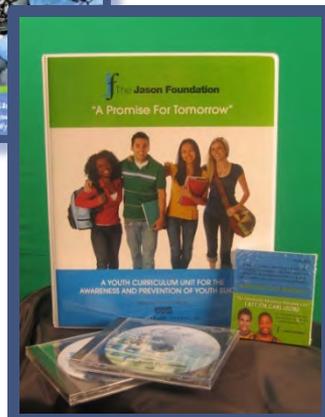
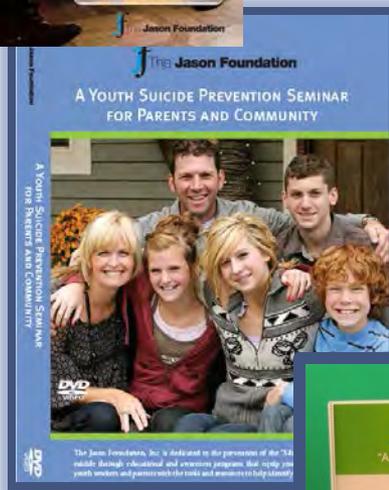
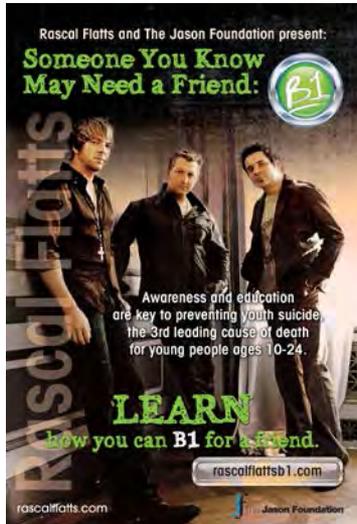
ann.schaack@uhsinc.com

OR

Call 1-877-778-2275 (CARL)

Community Assistance

Resource Line



Get Involved



CASTING THE NET UPSTREAM: PROMOTING WELLNESS TO PREVENT SUICIDE



FY2012-
2017

Alaska State Suicide Prevention Plan

Statewide Suicide Prevention Council
William Martin, Chairman
Sean Parnell, Governor

Ann Schaack, Representative
The Jason Foundation, Inc.
Dr. David Sperbeck at
North Star Behavioral Health
ann.schaack@uhsinc.com
907-264-4304

Barbara Franks
Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium
bjfranks@anthc.org
907-729-3751

J. Kate Burkhart,
Executive Director
Statewide Suicide Prevention Council,
Alaska Mental Health Board, and
Advisory Board on Alcoholism & Drug
Abuse
Kate.burkhart@alaska.gov
907-465-8920

thank you