

SUICIDE WARNING SIGNS

A person at acute risk for suicidal behavior most often will show warning signs:

- » **Threatening to hurt or kill him/herself**, or talking of wanting to hurt or kill him/herself; and/or,
- » **Looking for ways to kill him/herself** by seeking access to firearms, available pills, or other means; and/or,
- » **Talking or writing about death**, dying or suicide, when these actions are out of the ordinary.

Additional Warning Signs:

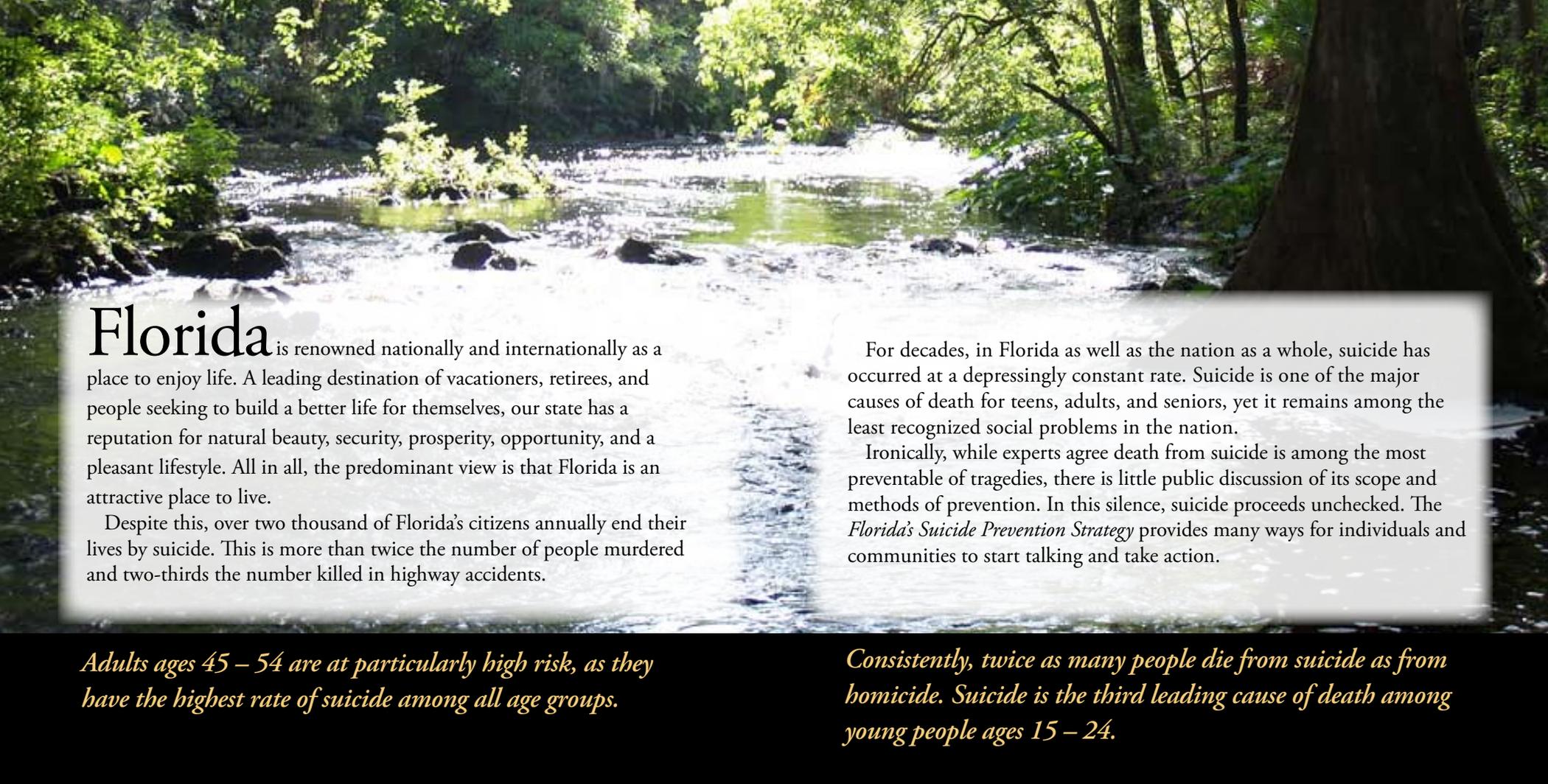
- » Increased substance (alcohol or drugs) use
- » No reason for living; no sense of purpose
- » Anxiety, agitation, unable to sleep or sleeping all the time
- » Feeling trapped – like there's no way out
- » Hopelessness
- » Withdrawing from friends, family
- » Rage, uncontrolled anger, seeking revenge
- » Acting reckless or engaging in risky activities, seemingly without thinking
- » Dramatic mood changes

If observed, seek help as soon as possible by contacting a mental health professional or calling 1-800-273-8255 (TALK) for a referral.

Exploring the 2011-2015

Florida Suicide Prevention Strategy

*you can be
a voice for hope*



Florida is renowned nationally and internationally as a place to enjoy life. A leading destination of vacationers, retirees, and people seeking to build a better life for themselves, our state has a reputation for natural beauty, security, prosperity, opportunity, and a pleasant lifestyle. All in all, the predominant view is that Florida is an attractive place to live.

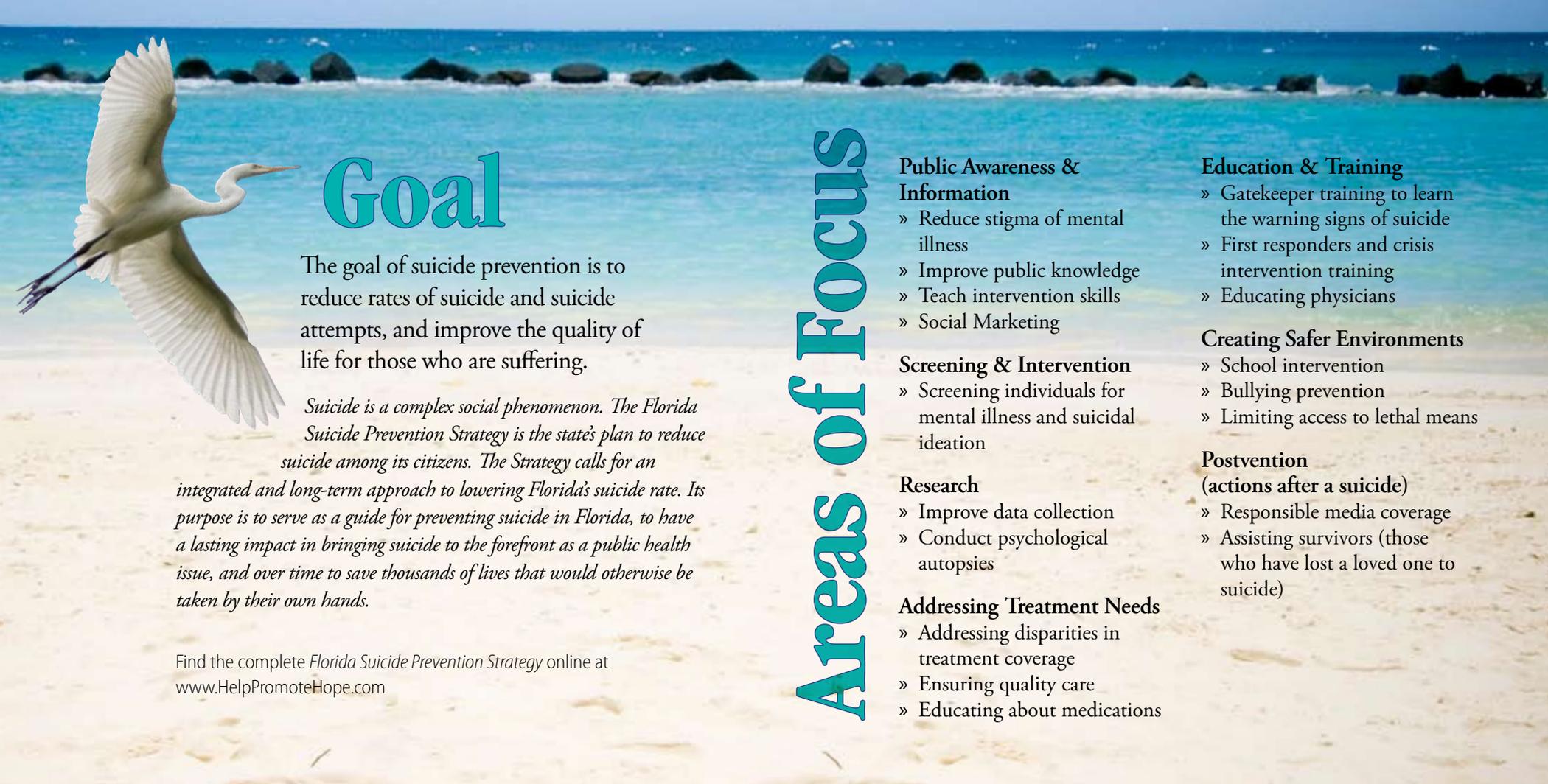
Despite this, over two thousand of Florida's citizens annually end their lives by suicide. This is more than twice the number of people murdered and two-thirds the number killed in highway accidents.

For decades, in Florida as well as the nation as a whole, suicide has occurred at a depressingly constant rate. Suicide is one of the major causes of death for teens, adults, and seniors, yet it remains among the least recognized social problems in the nation.

Ironically, while experts agree death from suicide is among the most preventable of tragedies, there is little public discussion of its scope and methods of prevention. In this silence, suicide proceeds unchecked. The *Florida's Suicide Prevention Strategy* provides many ways for individuals and communities to start talking and take action.

Adults ages 45 – 54 are at particularly high risk, as they have the highest rate of suicide among all age groups.

Consistently, twice as many people die from suicide as from homicide. Suicide is the third leading cause of death among young people ages 15 – 24.



Goal

The goal of suicide prevention is to reduce rates of suicide and suicide attempts, and improve the quality of life for those who are suffering.

Suicide is a complex social phenomenon. The Florida Suicide Prevention Strategy is the state's plan to reduce suicide among its citizens. The Strategy calls for an integrated and long-term approach to lowering Florida's suicide rate. Its purpose is to serve as a guide for preventing suicide in Florida, to have a lasting impact in bringing suicide to the forefront as a public health issue, and over time to save thousands of lives that would otherwise be taken by their own hands.

Find the complete *Florida Suicide Prevention Strategy* online at www.HelpPromoteHope.com

Areas of Focus

Public Awareness & Information

- » Reduce stigma of mental illness
- » Improve public knowledge
- » Teach intervention skills
- » Social Marketing

Screening & Intervention

- » Screening individuals for mental illness and suicidal ideation

Research

- » Improve data collection
- » Conduct psychological autopsies

Addressing Treatment Needs

- » Addressing disparities in treatment coverage
- » Ensuring quality care
- » Educating about medications

Education & Training

- » Gatekeeper training to learn the warning signs of suicide
- » First responders and crisis intervention training
- » Educating physicians

Creating Safer Environments

- » School intervention
- » Bullying prevention
- » Limiting access to lethal means

Postvention

(actions after a suicide)

- » Responsible media coverage
- » Assisting survivors (those who have lost a loved one to suicide)

Take Action...

The Statewide Office of Suicide Prevention and Suicide Prevention Coordinating Council have developed a framework of goals, objectives, and action ideas for moving the Florida Suicide Prevention Strategy into ongoing community action. Below are some highlights from these ideas.

What Individuals can do...



- » **Become familiar** with the protective factors, risk factors, and warning signs of suicide, along with resources offered by the Suicide Prevention Resource Center (www.sprc.org).
- » **Work to de-stigmatize depression and suicide** so the public views it as a treatable illness, not something to be ashamed of.
- » **Promote positive coping skills**, social support, belongingness and help-seeking as healthy behaviors.
- » **Proactively write letters** to your legislators and to the editor of your local newspaper about the issues of suicide prevention.
- » **Join or start a local suicide prevention coalition** in your community (<http://preventsuicide.fmhi.usf.edu>), and become part of the Florida Suicide Prevention Coalition (www.FloridaSuicidePrevention.org).
- » **Promote awareness** of the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline 1-800-273-8255 (TALK).

What Schools can do...



- » **Ensure children receive training** in coping, emotion regulation strategies and communication skills from an early age.
- » **Train students, families and school personnel** to create educational environments that are free from all types of harassment and bullying.
- » **Address liability concerns** to eliminate resistance to screening and assessment of students; then apply screening methods to identify who needs help.
- » **Offer prevention and counseling** services in schools.
- » **Create a “Where to Turn” book** listing agencies and hotlines available in the community to help youth, families, and personnel.
- » **Have a school crisis management protocol** in place to respond if a suicide occurs.
- » **Require suicide prevention training** at the college level for all health care professionals to equip them with the relevant skills as they start their careers.



Do your part to prevent suicide in Florida

What Coalitions Task forces can do...

- » **Ensure that coalitions and task forces have membership** from various areas of the community; e.g., mental health organizations, suicide survivors, schools, chamber of commerce, business owners, etc.
- » **Identify influential community leaders** and media to advocate for suicide prevention.
- » **Engage faith-based leaders** in suicide prevention planning and activities.

- » **Develop community action plans** to implement specific goals and objectives of the *Florida Suicide Prevention Strategy*.
- » **Incorporate suicide prevention** into the ongoing activities of community-based organizations.
- » **Use national public awareness resources** and identify local avenues to disseminate them.
- » **Organize and encourage grassroots support** for state and federal legislation addressing suicide prevention issues.



What Employers can do...

- » **Include suicide prevention**, intervention and postvention policies in the workplace and workforce training programs.
- » **Develop Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs)** that address mental health and substance abuse issues, including how to deal with depression and improve staff wellness.
- » **Support and encourage employees** in need to see their primary care practitioners for assessment and referrals to treatment.
- » **Expand gatekeeper training** that covers suicide prevention information and intervention skills to corporations.

be a voice for hope

can do...

For a complete list of action steps, visit www.HelpPromoteHope.com

What Health Providers can do...

- » **Increase awareness** of disorders related to mental health, substance abuse and learning difficulties, and the link to suicidal thoughts, ideations and attempts.
- » **Be alert for imminent warning signs** that a patient may be at risk for suicide. Research indicates that many adults visited a primary care physician within a month of dying by suicide.
- » **Integrate suicide prevention screening** methods into regular check-ups to identify the need for intervention.
- » **Improve communication** and collaboration among service providers to develop comprehensive treatment plans.
- » **Train all health care providers** to treat traumatic brain injury, post-traumatic stress disorder and other veterans' issues.
- » **Train all health care providers** to handle the despair of terminally ill patients which is currently left to the untrained and overwrought caregiver or family members.
- » **Implement support programs** facilitated by trained therapists to assist individuals who have attempted suicide and families who have survived the suicide of someone close.

Suicide Prevention Links:

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline
 1-800-273-8255 (TALK)
www.SuicidePreventionLifeline.org

Statewide Office of Suicide Prevention
www.HelpPromoteHope.com

Florida Suicide Prevention Implementation Project
<http://PreventSuicide.fmhi.usf.edu>

Suicide Prevention Resource Center
www.sprc.org

The SPRC registry of evidence-based practices in suicide prevention programs
www.sprc.org/featured_resources/bpr

American Association of Suicidology
www.suicidology.org

Suicide Prevention Action Network
www.spanusa.org

Florida Suicide Prevention Coalition
www.FloridaSuicidePrevention.org



STATEWIDE OFFICE OF SUICIDE PREVENTION
 AND
 SUICIDE PREVENTION COORDINATING COUNCIL



The Statewide Office of Suicide Prevention partnered with the Florida Suicide Prevention Implementation Project at FMHI/USF in an effort to help raise awareness of suicide prevention action steps and the Florida Suicide Prevention Strategy. This brochure serves as an avenue to help achieve this goal.

This brochure was designed to highlight elements of the Florida's Suicide Prevention Strategy and create a call to action by individuals and groups. It also includes a list of warning signs and resources, and promotes the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline 1-800-273-TALK (8255).



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