



National Response Messaging Kit

**MENTAL HEALTH &
SUICIDE PREVENTION**

NATIONAL RESPONSE
TO COVID-19

An initiative of the National Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention

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What Is the National Response?

The [Mental Health and Suicide Prevention National Response to COVID-19](#) (National Response) is an unprecedented public-private partnership bringing together diverse sectors to take bold actions to address the mental health and suicide-related challenges that may result from the COVID-19 pandemic. Please join us as we work to create cultural, systems, and policy change that will benefit the emotional and mental health of all Americans.

National Response Six Priorities

PRIORITY 1:

Change the national conversation about mental health and suicide.

PRIORITY 2:

Increase access to evidence-based treatments for substance use and mental health disorders in specialty and primary care.

PRIORITY 3:

Increase the use of non-punitive and supportive crisis intervention services.

PRIORITY 4:

Establish near real-time data collection systems to promptly identify changes in rates of suicide, overdose, and other key events, and of clusters or spikes in these outcomes.

PRIORITY 5:

Ensure the equitable delivery of comprehensive and effective suicide prevention and mental health services for Black Americans; Latinx Americans; American Indians/Alaskan Natives (AI/AN); lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and questioning (LGBTQ) individuals; and others disproportionately impacted by the pandemic.

PRIORITY 6:

Invest in prevention and early intervention approaches that treat the root causes of suicide and mental health problems.

Why Was the National Response Created?

The pandemic has focused the public's attention on mental health and suicide prevention and driven demand for action-oriented solutions. According to recent survey findings:

- 40.9% of U.S. adults reported struggling with pandemic-related mental health or substance abuse issues during a one-week period in June. (Source: [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#))
- 81% of Americans say it's more important than ever to make suicide prevention a national priority as a result of the pandemic. (Source: [The Harris Poll](#))
- 73% of Americans are more aware of the importance of taking care of their own mental health due to the pandemic. (Source: [The Harris Poll](#))

This watershed moment provides a unique opportunity for the nation to emerge with lasting cultural, systems and policy change that ensures everyone can access the care, support, and services they need—where and when they need them. The need has never been more urgent. The time for collaboration, coordination, and action is now. This is our mandate!

What Is This Messaging Kit?

The National Response Messaging Kit provides resources and materials to advance our key priorities for addressing the potential mental health and suicide-related impacts of the pandemic. Topics include the following:

- Key messages and messaging tips
- Infographic
- Customizable newsletter blurbs
- Social media posts and shareable graphics

Who Should Use This Kit and How to Get Involved?

Any individual and/or organization committed to bringing about cultural, systems, and policy change in mental health and suicide prevention should use this kit to educate and engage their constituencies and communities. Every American, every organization, and every sector can play a role in promoting mental health and suicide prevention, and the National Response provides a shared opportunity for all to get involved. Consider the following:

- **Use this messaging kit** to share information about the National Response and help advance key priorities that will strengthen mental health and suicide prevention nationally.

- Visit our website (www.NationalMentalHealthResponse.org) to learn more about the National Response priorities and how to take action.
- [Sign up for our mailing list](#) to stay informed on the work of the National Response.

Key Messages

National action around mental health and suicide prevention is urgently needed.

Due to the COVID-19 public health emergency, economic uncertainty, and social unrest, people across the country are reporting increased stress, anxiety, depression, trauma, and a range of other psychological symptoms. And while we do not know the true mental health impact of this pandemic, we must take steps now to meet the needs of all Americans and to also identify opportunities to build long-term resiliency.

- 81% of Americans say that as a result of the pandemic, it is more important than ever to make suicide prevention a national priority. (Source: [The Harris Poll](#))
- 52% of all Americans say they personally have become more open to talking about mental health since the start of the pandemic. (Source: [The Harris Poll](#))

Collaboration is essential to changing the trajectory of mental health and suicide prevention.

The [National Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention](#) (Action Alliance)—the nation’s public-private partnership—mobilized key national partners in federal agencies, corporations, nonprofits, and nongovernmental organizations to accelerate actionable solutions in response to the mental health challenges posed by COVID-19 and to avert a longer-term mental health crisis.

- Co-chairing the [National Response Steering Committee](#) are Action Alliance Executive Committee members Joshua Gordon, MD, PhD, director of the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH), and former U.S. Congressman Patrick J. Kennedy, founder of The Kennedy Forum. The Steering Committee sets strategy and guides the efforts of the National Response.
- Mental health and suicide prevention are complex public health issues requiring multi-sector perspectives and solutions. This is why the National Response Steering Committee guiding this work comprises leaders from academia, business, government, nonprofits, nongovernmental organizations, health care, public safety, and media and entertainment.

Mental health and suicide prevention are critical to the nation’s overall health and well-being.

This watershed moment provides a unique opportunity for the nation to emerge with lasting cultural, systems, and policy change that ensure everyone can access the care, support, and services they need—where and when they need them.

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cultural, systems and policy change that ensure everyone can access the care, support, and services they need—where and when they need them.

- By lifting up individual voices of people with lived experience, aligning around empirically grounded practices, and advocating for bold changes, we can have a transformative effect on improving overall health and well-being—today and well beyond COVID-19.
- The National Response has identified a number of strategic imperatives to help transform mental health and suicide prevention nationwide in the wake of the pandemic:
 - **Priority 1:** Change the national conversation about mental health and suicide.
 - **Priority 2:** Increase access to evidence-based treatments for substance use and mental health disorders in specialty and primary care.
 - **Priority 3:** Increase the use of non-punitive and supportive crisis intervention services.
 - **Priority 4:** Establish near real-time data collection systems to promptly identify changes in rates of suicide, overdose, and other key events, and of clusters or spikes in these outcomes.
 - **Priority 5:** Ensure the equitable delivery of comprehensive and effective suicide prevention and mental health services for Black Americans; Latinx Americans; American Indian/Alaskan Natives (AI/AN); lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and questioning (LGBTQ) individuals; and others disproportionately impacted by the pandemic.
 - **Priority 6:** Invest in prevention and early intervention that treat the root causes of suicide and mental health problems.

All Americans, and all sectors of society, can take action to promote mental wellness and resilience.

The National Response encourages all Americans to prioritize mental wellness as we grapple with today’s pandemic-driven challenges. Just as we wash our hands, wear masks, and practice physical distancing, it’s essential to care for our emotional needs—as well as those of people we care about.

- There are many [ways to support each other](#), from managing our own stress and anxiety to reaching out to friends and family who may be struggling.
- Everyone can help advocate for changes to policies and systems in order to strengthen mental health and suicide prevention services and supports.

Messaging Tips

- Be careful to not speculate about the potential impact COVID-19 may have on suicide rates. Such speculation can lead to normalizing suicide as a response to the current pandemic and could result in increased suicide contagion.
- When possible, include information about resources available for someone who may be experiencing an emotional crisis or thoughts of suicide. (See the section [Other Resources](#) for more information.)
- When mentioning data, especially data related to call and text volumes for crisis services, include the appropriate time frame and context.

Infographic

The National Response infographic visually represents the why, what, who, and how of the National Response. Use the infographic to support your communications efforts. For example:

- Post the infographic on social media
- Feature it in blogposts, newsletters, handouts, or presentations
- Repurpose it for PowerPoint presentations and Hill briefings

Download the Infographic Here

MENTAL HEALTH & SUICIDE PREVENTION NATIONAL RESPONSE TO COVID-19

The Time to Act is Now

Mental health and suicide prevention are critical to our nation's overall health. We must act now to emerge a stronger more resilient nation.

More than 49% of U.S. adults report struggling with pandemic-related mental health or substance abuse¹

As a result of the pandemic:

- 73%** are more aware of the importance of taking care of their mental health²
- It is more difficult to access needed mental services³

81% say it is more important than ever to make suicide prevention a national priority²

Collaboration is Key
All sectors of society are collaborating to accelerate action-oriented solutions.

Health Care | Government | Nonprofits | Entertainment/Media | Business | Community Groups

Transformational Change is Within Our Reach

The Action Alliance's Mental Health & Suicide Prevention National Response to COVID-19 is committed to ensuring equitable access to the care, support, and services Americans need – when and where they need them.

Cultural change | **Systems change** | **Policy change**

To achieve this we must:

- Priority 1:** Change the national conversation about mental health and suicide.
- Priority 2:** Increase access to evidence-based treatments for substance use disorders and mental health in specialty and primary care.
- Priority 3:** Increase use of non-punitive and supportive crisis intervention services.
- Priority 4:** Establish closer-to-real-time data collection systems.
- Priority 5:** Create equitable delivery of comprehensive, effective, mental health and suicide prevention services for Black Americans, Latinx Americans, American Indians/Alaska Natives, LGBTQ+ Americans, and others disproportionately impacted by COVID-19.
- Priority 6:** Invest in early intervention and prevention approaches that treat root causes of mental health problems.

Take Action to Promote Mental Wellness & Suicide Prevention:

www.NationalMentalHealthResponse.org

Stay connected on:

Facebook | Twitter | LinkedIn

1) Mental Health, Substance Use, and Suicide Statistics During the COVID-19 Pandemic, United States, June 24, 2020. 2) Survey: How are U.S. adults' (18-54) attitudes to COVID-19? Center for Disease Control and Prevention, Behavioral and Demographic Trends Report, NCHADS, 10/21/2020. 3) COVID-19: How are U.S. adults' (18-54) attitudes to COVID-19? Center for Disease Control and Prevention, Behavioral and Demographic Trends Report, NCHADS, 10/21/2020.

© 2020 National Public Perception Survey conducted by The Harris Poll, July 2020.

MENTAL HEALTH & SUICIDE PREVENTION NATIONAL RESPONSE TO COVID-19

ACTION ALLIANCE NATIONAL

Customizable Newsletter Blurbs

These ready-to-share blurbs will help inform and update your networks about the work of the National Response. Please share on social channels, as well as in e-newsletters, blogposts, and other communications platforms.

To personalize the piece, consider including a quote from your organization's leadership. You can also choose to shorten the copy for social media use or expand the copy for longer formats, such as magazines.

Include [ready-to-run infographics](#) and [social shareable graphics](#) to visually draw attention to these efforts.

Please remember to use #NationalMentalHealthResponse hashtag and/or learn more at www.NationalMentalHealthResponse.org.

BLURB 1:

The Pressing Need for A Unified National Response to COVID-19

Mental Health & Suicide Prevention National Response Convenes to Drive Change during COVID-19

In an effort to unite public and private sectors around mental health and suicide prevention in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, the [National Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention](#) (Action Alliance) recently announced the formation of the Mental Health & Suicide Prevention National Response to COVID-19 ([National Response](#)) to accelerate actionable solutions.

The partnership is a collaboration of diverse sectors, including academia, business, government, nonprofits, nongovernmental organizations, health care, public safety, and media and entertainment. The National Response is co-chaired by the Director of the National Institute of Mental Health, Dr. Joshua Gordon, and former U.S. Congressman and Founder of The Kennedy Forum, Patrick J. Kennedy, and is guided by a 30-member [Steering Committee](#).

"At [name of organization], we applaud the Action Alliance's National Response to unify diverse voices through their multi-sector approach and drive transformational change in a system already overburdened by challenges," said [name, title]. "None of us can sit on the sidelines, and each of us can play a role promoting mental health and suicide prevention."

"The [name of organization] recognizes that in order for our nation to emerge stronger from this public health pandemic we must act collaboratively. Yes, the need is urgent. Yes, the time is now. And, our members [types of members; e.g., nurses, caregivers, youth] are proud to do anything we can to get the word out."

We encourage members of [name of organization] to learn more at www.NationalMentalHealthResponse.org.

Customizable Newsletter Blurbs

BLURB 2:

The National Response's Strategic Priorities for Transformative Care

Unprecedented Public-Private Partnership around Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Unveils Priorities to Mitigate Risk from COVID-19

The [National Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention's](#) Mental Health & Suicide Prevention National Response to COVID-19 ([National Response](#)) recently released its priorities for driving cultural, systems, and policy change around mental health and suicide prevention.

"As a leader in *[field]*, we at *[name of organization]* understand the urgency of addressing systems-level change to close widening gaps in health care access, quality, and affordability," said *[name, title]*. "As the unifying, coordinated body, the National Response has thoughtfully prioritized six platforms that will help galvanize America around much needed change."

[Name of organization] commends the National Response and its collaborative work to identify [six strategic priorities](#) for transforming mental health and suicide prevention nationwide in the wake of the pandemic:

- **Priority 1:** Change the national conversation about mental health and suicide.
- **Priority 2:** Increase access to evidence-based treatments for substance use and mental health disorders in specialty and primary care.
- **Priority 3:** Increase the use of non-punitive and supportive crisis intervention services.
- **Priority 4:** Establish near real-time data collection systems to promptly identify changes in rates of suicide, overdose, and other key events, and of clusters or spikes in these outcomes.
- **Priority 5:** Ensure the equitable delivery of comprehensive and effective suicide prevention and mental health services for Black Americans; Latinx Americans; American Indians/Alaskan Natives (AI/AN); lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and questioning (LGBTQ) individuals; and others disproportionately impacted by the pandemic.
- **Priority 6:** Invest in prevention and early intervention approaches that treat the root causes of suicide and mental health problems.

The National Response recognizes the urgency and the incredible potential to change how we as a nation view, talk about, and address mental health and suicide prevention. We encourage our members at *[name of organization]* to watch this space in the coming months to stay abreast of the National Response's calls-to-action, how organizations like ours and individuals can get involved to help address the mental health and suicide prevention needs spurred by COVID-19 today, and how to support people in the years to come.

Customizable Newsletter Blurbs

BLURB 3:

Launch of the National Response Website

Mental Health & Suicide Prevention National Response to COVID-19 Launches Website

The [National Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention's](#) Mental Health & Suicide Prevention National Response to COVID-19 ([National Response](#)), recently formed to change the way the nation views, talks about, and treats mental health and suicide prevention, has launched its new website at www.NationalMentalHealthResponse.org.

This unprecedented public-private partnership aims to drive cultural, systems, and policy change to address urgent and long-term needs regarding mental health and suicide as we all grapple with pandemic-related challenges.

"[Name of organization] is convinced that the National Response's shared goals are achievable if we all collaborate, connect, and share our best practices, resources and contacts," said [name, title]. "Multiple crises spurred by COVID-19 are colliding. We cannot afford to sit on the side lines hoping that a better, more equitable tomorrow is around the corner. We have to create our future together. The National Response's bold vision will help this nation emerge with lasting systems and policy changes that ensure we ALL come out stronger, better, together."

Keep current with the National Response's progress on national-level action around mental health and suicide prevention. Visit the National Response website at www.NationalMentalHealthResponse.org often for information, updates, and calls-to-action and to learn how each of us—as individuals, organizations, and companies in all sectors—can play a role to promote mental wellness and resilience.

Social Media Posts and Graphics

We hope you'll use the sample National Response-related social posts and shareable graphics below. Feel free to tailor the posts or create your own. Graphics reflect each of the [six priorities](#) and actionable solutions identified by the National Response. Access these visual assets [here](#) and use them with your social posts or as stand-alone communication tools.

SAMPLE POSTS:

Why There's A Need for the National Response

- A recent @CDCgov survey found 40.9% of U.S. adults experienced a mental or behavioral health condition connected to #COVID19. **[ADD ORGANIZATION HANDLE]** supports the @Action_Alliance's #NationalMentalHealthResponse unified efforts. Learn more: [NationalMentalHealthResponse.org](#)
- A recent @HarrisPoll found 81% of Americans feel it's more important than ever to make suicide prevention a national priority. **[ADD ORGANIZATION HANDLE]** commends the efforts of #NationalMentalHealthResponse to drive change. More: [NationalMentalHealthResponse.org](#). #COVID19

About the National Response

- Through engagement from groups such as **[ADD ORGANIZATION HANDLE]**, the @Action_Alliance's #NationalMentalHealthResponse will accelerate actionable solutions around the potential mental health and suicide-related challenges posed by #COVID19, now and in the future.
- The @Action_Alliance's core strength is bringing together diverse partners to lead systems-level change. **[ADD ORGANIZATION HANDLE]** applauds #NationalMentalHealthResponse for working to galvanize national action around mental health and suicide prevention in response to #COVID19.
- The @Action_Alliance's #NationalMentalHealthResponse is a nonpartisan, independent convener of diverse public and private sector partners working to address the complex public health issues of mental health and suicide. Learn more at [NationalMentalHealthResponse.org](#). #COVID19

About the National Response's Six Strategic Priorities

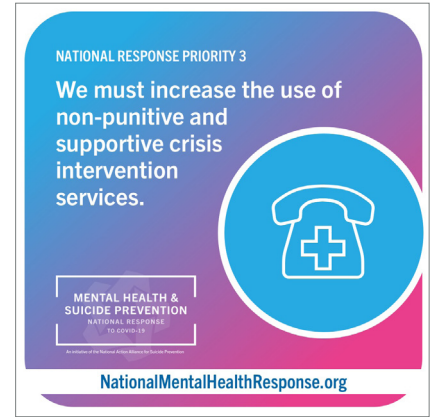
- The @Action_Alliance's #NationalMentalHealthResponse is focused on 6 priorities to create lasting cultural, systems, and policy changes because our physical and mental health are inextricably linked. More via [NationalMentalHealthResponse.org](#).

- We must change the national conversation around suicide prevention by elevating the voices of those with mental health conditions and/or a history of suicidal experiences. That's why **[ADD ORGANIZATION HANDLE]** supports the work of the @Action_Alliance's #NationalMentalHealthResponse. NationalMentalHealthResponse.org
- Every American should have access to #evidencebasedtreatment for substance use and mental health disorders in both specialty and primary care. That's why **[ADD ORGANIZATION HANDLE]** supports the @Action_Alliance's #NationalMentalHealthResponse. NationalMentalHealthResponse.org
- Establishing & investing in a comprehensive #crisisresponse system with trained professionals to safely respond to people in crisis is a priority for the @Action_Alliance's #NationalMentalHealthResponse. **[ADD ORGANIZATION HANDLE]** supports this work. NationalMentalHealthResponse.org
- To better identify, intervene, and mitigate suicidal distress, we must establish near real-time data collection related to mental health and suicide. **[ADD ORGANIZATION HANDLE]** is committed to supporting #NationalMentalHealthResponse in this effort. NationalMentalHealthResponse.org
- Those most impacted by #COVID19, including Black Americans, must have equitable access to comprehensive, effective mental health & suicide prevention services. That's why **[ADD ORGANIZATION HANDLE]** supports the #NationalMentalHealthResponse. More at NationalMentalHealthResponse.org.
- We must invest in treating root causes of suicide & mental health problems, including job loss, poverty, hunger, homelessness, isolation & other factors. **[ADD ORGANIZATION HANDLE]** supports #NationalMentalHealthResponse in making this a key priority. NationalMentalHealthResponse.org

About the Media's Role

- News media play an important role in mental health promotion and suicide prevention. **[ADD ORGANIZATION HANDLE]** encourages all news media to use best practices when reporting on these important issues. Check out #NationalMentalHealthResponse. NationalMentalHealthResponse.org #COVID19

Shareable Graphics




[Download the Shareable Graphics Here](#)

Reminder

Tag our social channels in your posts and use the hashtag #NationalMentalHealthResponse:

 **Twitter:** @Action_Alliance

 **Facebook:** @NationalActionAllianceforSuicidePrevention

 **LinkedIn:** @National Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention

Other Resources

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

The FAQ page provides an overview of the National Response, such as its structure, goals, and priorities. It also contains mental health and suicide prevention resources, including where to go if you or someone you know is in crisis.

[Download the FAQs Here](#)

Framework for Successful Messaging

The Action Alliance's [Framework for Successful Messaging](#) is an online resource that provides guidance and tools for anyone who develops and disseminates suicide-related content. This research-based, practical resource helps you develop messages that are strategic, safe, and positive and which make use of relevant guidelines and best practices.

Additionally, the Action Alliance website features [other helpful messaging resources](#) and guidance for those messaging about mental health and suicide prevention in the wake of COVID-19.



Crisis Lines

The pandemic is an unprecedented time that has impacted all Americans. No one is immune from feeling overwhelmed or having thoughts of suicide.

If you or someone you know is experiencing an emotional crisis or thoughts of suicide, free, 24/7, confidential services are available. Here is a sampling of a few crisis lines:

- For emotional support specifically related to COVID-19: Call the Disaster Distress Helpline (800-985-5990) or text TalkWithUs to 66746.
- For those experiencing a suicidal crisis: Call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-TALK (8255) or text the Crisis Text Line (text HOME to 741741).
- For those who identify as part of the LGBTQ community: Call The TrevorLifeline (866-488-7386) or text START to 678-678.
- For veterans who are in crisis: Call the Veterans Crisis Line (800-273-8255 and press 1) or text 838255
- For frontline workers dealing with anxiety, stress, fear, isolation or other difficult emotions: Text FRONTLINE to 741741

Questions?

Communications Contacts:

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We appreciate and value your support of the National Response and our shared goal of enhancing America's mental health and wellness.