

## MEDIA STATEMENT

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*A media statement prepared by the National Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention's (Action Alliance) [Media Messaging Work Group](#) in response to newly released 2019 suicide data.*

### ***Action Alliance Statement on the New CDC Mortality Data Showing Slight Decline in Suicide Deaths in 2019***

*While new figures provide encouraging news, more work to be done to see long-term downward trend*

WASHINGTON, DC (December 22, 2020) – “The [new data released today](#) by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s (CDC) National Center for Health Statistics show suicide rates in the U.S. declined slightly for the first time in nearly 15 years. In 2019, the age-adjusted suicide rate was 13.9, down from 14.2 in 2018. While we are encouraged by this news, one year of data does not indicate a trend and there is still much work to be done. In 2019 alone, 47,511 Americans lost their lives to suicide—representing mothers, fathers, daughters, sons, spouses, and friends. We are still losing far too many lives to this *preventable* public health issue, which is why our country must act now to make suicide prevention a national priority.

To better understand the full picture of suicide in our country, and to help inform prevention strategies and services, closer to real-time data is critical. Much like we have real-time data collection systems for other public health issues, the same is needed when it comes to suicide and suicide-related behaviors so we can better identify, intervene, and mitigate suicide and suicide-related distress. In addition, we need more robust investments in research—from both the public and private sectors—in order to assess the effectiveness of suicide prevention approaches, identify how best to implement them, and evaluate how different strategies work together. Research has played a critical role in helping to identify populations who are at highest risk for suicide and identifying evidence-based strategies, but more research is needed moving forward.

In order to see a sustained, long-lasting decrease in the suicide rate, we also need to implement systemic changes, particularly to our mental health system and crisis services infrastructure. For example, as we prepare for the 2022 rollout of 988 as the new national three-digit number for suicide prevention and mental health crises, it’s imperative that we ensure an integrated, sustainable, well-resourced crisis infrastructure is in place in order to provide a full continuum of care for those who may be struggling or in crisis. While a three-digit number is an important step forward for our nation’s crisis services, a number alone is not enough.

Finally, research tells us that social connection with family, friends, neighbors, and others—especially during periods of physical distancing—is critical to our overall mental health and well-being, and is seen as a key protective factor for suicide. We need to equip all Americans with the tools and resources needed to be there for the people in their lives—even before someone is experiencing a crisis.

As the nation’s only public-private partnership for suicide prevention advancing the [National Strategy for Suicide Prevention](#), we call on leaders from all sectors and industries to make suicide prevention a national priority by becoming engaged in the issue and bringing resources to bear. With tens of thousands of American lives at stake each year, the time for action is now.”

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**FOR MEDIA PARTNERS:**

Research shows that the media may influence suicide rates by the way they report on suicide. Evidence suggests that when the media tell stories of people positively coping in suicidal moments, more suicides can be prevented. We urge all members of the media working on these stories to refer to the [Recommendations for Reporting on Suicide](#) for best practices for safely and accurately reporting on suicide (such as including the [National Suicide Prevention Lifeline 800-273-TALK \[8255\]](#)). For stories of persons with lived experience of suicidality and finding hope, refer to [www.lifelineforattempt survivors.org](http://www.lifelineforattempt survivors.org).

**NATIONAL ACTION ALLIANCE FOR SUICIDE PREVENTION:**

The [National Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention](#) (Action Alliance) is the public-private partnership working to advance the [National Strategy for Suicide Prevention](#) and make suicide prevention a national priority. The [Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration](#) provides funding to [EDC](#) to operate and manage the Secretariat for the Action Alliance, which was launched in 2010. Learn more at [theactionalliance.org](http://theactionalliance.org) and join the conversation on suicide prevention by following the Action Alliance on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [LinkedIn](#), and [YouTube](#).

**MENTAL HEALTH & SUICIDE PREVENTION NATIONAL RESPONSE TO COVID-19:**

The [Mental Health & Suicide Prevention National Response to COVID-19](#) (National Response) is a dynamic, diverse, nonpartisan group of leading public and private sector organizations that are committed to driving meaningful, lasting change through collaboration, leadership, and action. As an initiative of the Action Alliance, the National Response is the unifying national voice and galvanizing force for accelerating actionable solutions to strengthen mental health, suicide prevention, and resilience for all Americans.