

# INCLUSIVE YOUTH SUICIDE PREVENTION

## Strategies for including young adult voice in suicide prevention efforts.

The importance of including the voices of those impacted by suicide prevention adds an important perspective to efforts. Young adults know best what they need and have one of the strongest links to their peers. Check out the strategies below for ideas directly from Nebraska young adults about how they want to be heard and included in your prevention and intervention efforts.

### IMAGINE A WORLD

For young adults, a world where suicide prevention was a priority would look like:



People helping people



Less loss



Open conversations about suicide



More happiness and success



We'd hear the word "suicide"



Informed and aware people

### GETTING THE MESSAGE HEARD

A message finds impact only when heard. Here's how youth suggested reaching them.

**STUFF** – Use things like bracelets, t-shirts and phone cases puts the message out there, thus providing opportunities for conversation and connection. Awareness efforts can include wearing these items on dedicated days or at sporting/community events.

**EVENTS** – Provide opportunities to bring the conversation into the light by holding awareness walks, a Day of Silence, concerts with a prevention message, etc. Engage young people in the community, school, or group hosting the event as leaders and partners in identifying, planning, and facilitating the event. Word of mouth is greatest marketing for any events. Giving youth ownership puts the efforts among those you're trying to reach.

**PUT IT EVERYWHERE** – Pull the conversation out of the shadows by providing opportunities for discussion everywhere. Consider using as many mediums as possible. These could include everything from billboards to flyers to fast food containers to school newspapers to bathroom stalls.

**CONNECT** – Reach out. Youth have a greater awareness about touch issues than adults often wish to acknowledge. Don't be afraid of engaging in a real conversation with youth one-on-one or in small groups. Listen fully and don't judge.

**FIRST-HAND EXPERIENCE HAVE IMPACT** – Create opportunities for survivors to speak at schools or community events. Peer experiences have awareness and training power. Enhance events by adding a fun or personalizing component such as reflective art projects or turning the message into local action.

## INTERVENTION AND REPORTING

Lifting suicide prevention out of the shadows and creating conversation is just the first step. Next, adult supporters must be ready to hear them. Here's what youth said they need to speak up.

**SAFE PLACES** – Educational/support groups and wellness centers provide an opportunity to talk with people willing to listen to the whole story via many mediums (phone, text, and in-person). Take trauma or youth-serving system experience (child welfare, juvenile justice, behavioral health, etc.) into account. Unfortunately, youth may have a fear of repercussions (removal, more restrictions, etc.) for speaking up, so be prepared to spend time building trust.

**SAFE AND ACCESSIBLE PEOPLE** – Adults must back up words with action. Do not offer to listen, if you can not follow through. Be honest. Share next steps and options. Get the help you promise. Maintain an open door and follow-up. Prevention and intervention is a relationship, not a one-time conversation.

**EMPOWER TEENS TO HELP** – For teens, friends are often the first line of support. Create opportunities for young adults to be armed with information. Establish ambassadors, mentorships and peer groups. Hope Squads provide a formal way of empowering peers in school environments. Learn more at <https://hopesquad.com/>.

**INCREASE AWARENESS** – Go to where young people are. Be bright, interactive, and hands-on. Music, food and well-known people help youth feel safe and welcomed.

**PROVIDE INFORMATION** – Where can resources be found? What will happen to the loved one after reporting? Utilize fun, free, interactive, up-to-date, and incentive opportunities to get youth important information via training. Social media ads and “learn more” buttons offer ways to connect virtually. Learning more can spark curiosity and help youth feel safe speaking up.

## WHAT ABOUT THE INTERNET?

The online world impacts young people in ways today that no other generation has experienced. Here are few tips on social media and cyberbullying.

**BE POSITIVE** – Use social media to build people up, post supportive notes, remind them they are loved and important and call out negativity.

**TEACH SAFETY** – Cyberbullying is real and hard to escape. Teach youth the realities of social media, such as posts last forever, not everyone is safe, and how to handle bullying situations.

**GO VIRAL** –Hashtags, modern music, ads/banners on games or videos, and viral videos create awareness.

**MARKET RESOURCES** – Create hotline ads and boost them in search engines. Encourage news sources to talk resources verses tragedy. Provide resource in print and include information about internet safety.

**BUILD CONNECTIONS** – Create Facebook groups and support sites. Hold in-person groups for these facing cyber-bullying. Make it okay to talk about suicide. Utilize silent signs to ask for help.



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