

2021-2022

# Federal Public Policy Priorities

## Lead

Issues on which AFSP will play a leadership role – developing the policy position, marshaling support, and generating advocacy activity:

- Increase funding for suicide prevention research at the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH)
- Continue to invest in suicide prevention programs within the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), including dedicated suicide prevention funding lines and grant programs
- Increase funding for the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (1-800-273-8255) to support the transition to a 3-digit number (9-8-8) and expand access to mobile crisis services, stabilization centers, and appropriate crisis response
- Maintain suicide prevention for Veterans, Servicemembers, and their families as a national priority
- Maintain and expand funding and grant programs for suicide prevention in K-12 schools and higher education
- Promote policies to adequately respond to at-risk individuals in healthcare and emergency department settings, including basic screening, trainings, interventions, and data collection \*
- Advocate for the inclusion of diverse and minority populations in mental health and suicide prevention legislation and policies
- Increase funding for suicide prevention and education programs for American Indian and Alaskan Native communities
- Promote the construction of and funding for barriers to prevent suicide from bridges and other jumping sites
- Expand mental health professional services through a federal loan repayment program to relieve workforce shortages

## Collaborate

Issues on which AFSP will work as part of a coalition or group, providing active support to achieve these important policy objectives:

- Minimize barriers to telehealth access for mental health care, and ensure coverage for those services
- Improve access to culturally informed, evidence-based quality mental health care for diverse and minority populations and underserved communities
- Increase funding to address substance use disorders, including opioid and alcohol use, through research, education, prevention, and treatment

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- Uniformly implement and enforce Mental Health Parity laws and regulations
- Preserve and increase Medicaid and Medicare funding for mental health services
- Promote policies and programs to improve access to mental health care, and prevent suicide in correctional facilities\*
- Promote policies to prevent LGBTQ suicide, including integrating LGBTQ populations into existing data collection tools on suicide mortality and risk behavior
- Increase funding for the National Violent Death Reporting System (NVDRS) to facilitate improvements in training and infrastructure

## Support

Issues related to AFSP's mission that will advance public understanding of suicide prevention:

- Support policies and programs that promote mental health and prevent suicidal behavior in the workplace
- Promote policies that eliminate stigma, reinforce safe messaging, and build a positive culture around mental health
- Increase access to effective mental health and suicide prevention resources for farming and rural communities
- Implement and support funding for policies and programs that include suicide prevention education as a basic component of firearm safety\*

## Explore

Issues that require further exploration or policy research/analysis and are not yet AFSP policy proposals:

- The role peer support programs can play in reducing suicide risk and attempts
- Research and policies to address and reduce suicidal ideation
- Research and policies on assisted death (other common terms include physician assisted suicide or Death with Dignity laws)
- Firearms policies as a means to mitigate suicide risk and reduce suicide, including safe storage, temporary transfers, and waiting periods\*
- Upstream suicide prevention policies based on social determinants of health, including economic stability, access to healthcare, education, and social and community contexts of an individual
- The relationship between adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) and increased risk for suicide

Please note: Issues within each category are not listed in priority order

\*Indicates a policy related to the four critical areas within AFSP's Project 2025, see [afsp.org/project2025](https://afsp.org/project2025)