

Require Health Professionals to be Trained to Assess, Treat, and Manage Suicidal Behavior

Many health professionals are unprepared to assess, treat, and manage suicide risk, as it is not a routine part of their training or education. AFSP urges states to require health professionals to acquire the skills and confidence needed to support patients at risk for suicide.

The Facts



Health professionals regularly encounter patients at risk for suicide



Treating mental health conditions alone doesn't necessarily treat suicidal behavior



No nationally set standards require this training for health professionals

AFSP Recommendations

- **Training requirements should apply to mental health and primary care professionals**
- **Training should occur prior to initial licensure and to maintain licensure**
- **States should set standards for training quality, duration, and frequency**

Background

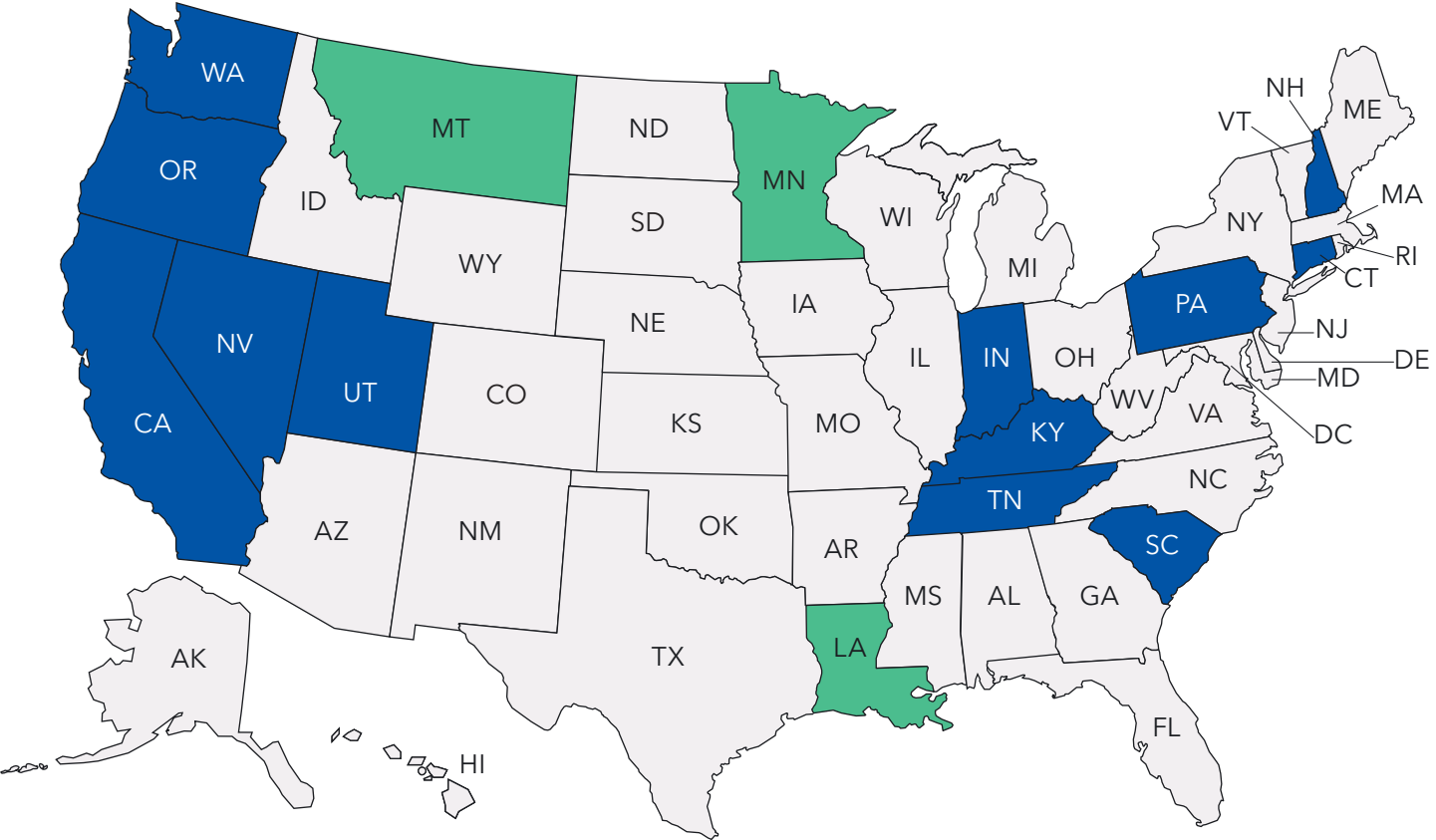
- Engaging patients in suicide-focused treatment can reduce suicide risk factors and deaths.
- After receiving suicide-specific training, health professionals report increased confidence to assess risk and manage suicidal behavior, decreased hesitation to directly ask their patients about suicide, and changes in suicide care practices and clinical policy.
- Nearly all people who die by suicide make a healthcare visit in the year before death and about half contact the health system within a month of suicide.
- Primary care physicians identified 30% of their patients as "mental health patients," and 30% of youth patients accessed mental health treatments through primary care providers.
- 1 in 2 psychiatrists and 1 in 5 psychologists reported experiencing patient suicide.

Only 12 states require training, and of these, only 2 include primary care providers.

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Health Professional Training Laws as of August 2024



- State Requires Training
- State Encourages Training

Source: American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP)