

Access Advocacy



American
Foundation
for Suicide
Prevention

Happy Summer, and welcome to the July 2026 edition of Access Advocacy!

July is [Bebe Moore Campbell National Minority/BIPOC Mental Health Awareness Month](#), a time to highlight the importance of equitable access to suicide prevention and mental health resources in communities that continue to face structural barriers to care and elevated suicide rates.

The American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP) advances education and awareness through initiatives such as [L.E.T.S. Save Lives](#), an educational program designed to increase understanding of suicide risk in Black and African American communities, and [Talk Saves Lives: An Introduction to Suicide Prevention for the Latinx and Hispanic Community](#), which provides culturally relevant education about suicide prevention, mental health, and help-seeking within Latinx and Hispanic communities across the United States.

Participants learn about risk and protective factors, recognize warning signs, build confidence in having conversations about suicide, and connect individuals to help. The program's goal is to foster open dialogue about mental health and encourage help-seeking to prevent suicide and suicide attempts.

AFSP also highlights [The UPRIGHT](#), a collection of AFSP resources—including research, programs, and policy—aimed at advancing health equity in suicide prevention by addressing gaps in access, effectiveness, representation, and cultural relevance, and by elevating insights from the communities it seeks to serve.

This month also marks the fourth anniversary of the [988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline](#), a critical access point for crisis support, with its anniversary on July 16. Continued investment is essential to strengthen prevention and crisis response systems and ensure 988 is fully resourced and responsive to the needs of all communities.

As we recognize this month, AFSP remains dedicated to advancing equitable access to care and strengthening prevention and crisis response systems for communities facing elevated suicide risk.

Laurel Stine, JD, MA
Executive Vice President and Chief Policy & Advocacy Officer

Legislative Updates

Federal

Join the Campaign to Restore Specialized 988 Services for LGBTQ+ Youth

Last year, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) discontinued the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline's Press 3 option, which connected LGBTQ+ youth with specially trained crisis counselors. Following strong advocacy from the suicide prevention community and bipartisan pressure from Congress, the Department of Health and Human Services recently announced plans to restore specialized LGBTQ+ youth services by the end of 2026.

AFSP continues to advocate for the restoration of these lifesaving services.

On July 15, AFSP joined members of Congress, coalition partners, and advocates at a Capitol Hill press conference calling for the re-establishment of specialized 988 services for LGBTQ+ youth and highlighting the importance of ensuring that all young people can access crisis support that meets their unique needs.

Congress can help ensure these services are permanently protected by passing the bipartisan **988 LGBTQ+ Youth Access Act** ([S. 2826/H.R. 5434](#)).

Take Action

[Join AFSP's latest advocacy campaign](#) and urge your members of Congress to support the **988 LGBTQ+ Youth Access Act**.



Laurel Stine joins Reps. Krishnamoorthi (D-IL), Mike Lawler (R-NY), and Sharice Davids (D-KS), alongside partners from the Trevor Project, in support of restoring specialized 988 services for LGBTQ+ youth

Progress on 2026 Advocacy Forum Priorities

Thanks to the efforts of AFSP advocates across the country, several 2026 Advocacy Forum priorities continue to gain support in Congress:

- **Daniel J. Harvey Jr. and Adam Lambert Improving Servicemember Transition to Reduce Veteran Suicide Act ([S. 2096/H.R. 2878](#))**
 - 8 new Senate cosponsors
 - 11 new House cosponsors
- **Barriers to Suicide Act ([H.R. 3505](#))**
 - 14 new House cosponsors
- **Stabilization to Prevent (STOP) Suicide Act ([H.R. 8124](#))**
 - 2 new House cosponsors

Thank you to everyone who has contacted lawmakers, attended meetings, and helped build support for these important initiatives.

Take Action

If you have not yet taken action in support of these bills, [contact your members of Congress today](#).

Kids Online Safety Act (KOSA) Update

On June 29, the House of Representatives passed the bipartisan Kids Internet and Digital Safety (KIDS) Act ([H.R.7757](#)), a package of youth online safety and privacy measures that includes KOSA. The House-passed version differs from legislation [introduced by the Senate](#) last year, most notably by excluding a "duty of care" provision and adopting a narrower federal preemption framework that allows states to enact stronger privacy protections. In recent months, AFSP signed on to a coalition letter supporting House passage of the KIDS Act and a separate coalition letter urging the Senate to advance KOSA. Through both letters, AFSP joined partners in emphasizing the importance of bipartisan action to protect youth online. To learn more, view the coalition letters here: [House Coalition Letter](#) and [Senate Coalition Letter](#).

Regulatory Updates

This summer, AFSP [submitted comments](#) in response to a Department of Health and Human Services [Request for Information \(RFI\)](#) seeking recommendations on improving the prevention and treatment of chronic substance use disorders and co-occurring mental illness.

AFSP's comments highlighted the importance of:

- Integrating suicide prevention into public health initiatives
- Expanding access to evidence-based programs
- Strengthening crisis care and follow-up services
- Supporting workforce development
- Improving data collection and evaluation
- Increasing access to care through innovative service delivery models

In addition, AFSP recently mobilized advocates nationwide to submit comments concerning a proposed [Office of Management and Budget \(OMB\) rule](#) that could impact federal research and grant funding processes.

Thank you to everyone who took action and helped elevate the importance of suicide prevention research.

State



2026 Advocacy Action Day (AAD) Wrap-Up

The 2026 [Advocacy Action Day](#) season demonstrated the power of advocates across the country coming together to advance suicide prevention policy.

- **42 states** hosted AADs this season, including Hawai'i hosting an in-person event for the first time.
- **[33 state bills supported at AADs were enacted!](#)** Most recent enacted bills include the following that promote school-based suicide prevention and fostering a culture of mental health among students:

Louisiana

- Public colleges and universities must implement suicide prevention plans and post the [988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline](#) on student ID cards ([HB 626](#)).
- Middle and high schools receiving federal funding must display 988 signage in highly visible locations ([HB 392](#)).

Rhode Island

- The Nathan Bruno and Jason Flatt Act amendment now requires all middle and high schools to include the number(s) for a state or national suicide prevention hotline and substance abuse crisis center, such as the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline, on student and staff ID cards ([HB 7026/SB 2348](#)).

By the Numbers

- **2,024 letters** sent to state public officials in support of AAD legislation.



Updated State Fact Sheets

Updated AFSP State Facts are now published at afsp.org/state-facts.

Each state, Washington, D.C., and Puerto Rico now has its own webpage and downloadable fact sheet featuring the newest **2024 CDC data**. These resources can be shared with lawmakers, community partners, and fellow advocates.

Each page also includes:

- Relevant state laws
- State suicide prevention infrastructure
- Prevention plans and initiatives
- Additional advocacy information

Looking Ahead: Suicide Prevention Awareness Month

September is Suicide Prevention Awareness Month, and September 10 is World Suicide Prevention Day. AFSP chapter policy and advocacy committees will soon begin working to secure state and local **Suicide Prevention Awareness Month proclamations**.

Connect with your [local AFSP chapter](#) to learn more and get involved.



Get Involved: Out of the Darkness Community Walks

Advocacy happens year-round, and one of the best ways to strengthen our movement is by connecting advocacy efforts with community engagement through AFSP's [Out of the Darkness Community Walks](#).

AFSP's signature fundraising series brings together friends, family members, survivors, advocates, and supporters in more than **400 communities nationwide** to raise awareness and funds for suicide prevention.

Whether you're already involved in advocacy or are looking for a new way to support AFSP's mission, Community Walks offer an opportunity to build relationships, engage with your local chapter, and help grow the movement. Advocacy volunteers can play an important role in sharing policy priorities at Walk events, while Walk participants who are new to advocacy can discover opportunities to take action on suicide prevention issues throughout the year.

Find a Community Walk near you and get involved:

[\[Find a Community Walk\]](#)

Upcoming Events

AFSP will be attending the [National Conference of State Legislatures \(NCSL\) Annual Summit](#) in Chicago later this month.

Our team will meet with public officials, legislative staff, advocacy organizations, and potential partners to help ensure suicide prevention remains a priority in states across the country.

Resources

[Updated AFSP Advocacy Issue Briefs and One-Pagers](#)

[A Federal Appropriations Guide Built for Public Health Advocates: Global Health Advocacy Incubator](#)

[Pain in the Nation Report 2026: Trust For America's Health](#)

New Research

[U.S. Trans Survey \(Williams Institute\) Suicide Thoughts and Attempts Among Transgender People](#)

[Suicide Mortality Among Adolescents and Young Adults After Launch of a Suicide and Crisis Lifeline](#)

[Emergency Department Visits for Suspected Suicide Attempts — United States, 2021–2025](#)
