# HARD HAT COURAGE IMPLEMENTATION TOOLKIT

Suicide Prevention for Construction Workplaces

HARD HAT COURAGE | American Foundation for Suicide Prevention

# A MESSAGE TO CONSTRUCTION WORKPLACES

The construction industry has one of the highest suicide rates in the United States compared to other industries. That reality is not set in stone — it is a call to action.

Safety is mandatory in the construction industry. Keeping workers safe depends on planning, standards, accountability, and leadership. The same commitment that protects workers from physical hazards must also extend to mental health and suicide prevention.

The Hard Hat Courage Implementation Toolkit was developed by the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP) in collaboration with construction industry leaders, safety professionals, and subject matter experts. It provides a construction-specific framework to help workplaces build and sustain suicide prevention programs integrating emotional and mental health into the safety systems already in place. The toolkit is designed to support construction organizations of all sizes, from small employers and local unions to large companies with established safety and human resources infrastructure. Organizations are encouraged to adapt the recommendations to fit their size, structure, culture, and available resources. If you have questions about implementation or would like technical assistance in bringing Hard Hat Courage to your workplace, please contact AFSP at: construction@afsp.org.

## How to Use This Toolkit

Hard Hat Courage is designed to be implemented over time, with organizations incorporating recommendations into their workforce channels where engagement will be most impactful. Begin by reviewing the Implementation Roadmap to assess your current efforts, identify priority actions, and assign responsibilities to key workplace leads, who can ensure materials and resources are accessible to their teams. Organizations with limited resources may choose to start with a few foundational actions, such as providing awareness training, promoting available mental health resources, and incorporating Toolbox Talks into existing safety meetings. As capacity grows, additional elements can be added to strengthen and sustain the program.

### THIS TOOLKIT IS ORGANIZED INTO FIVE SECTIONS:

- Leadership, Policy & Culture
- Training
- Help-Seeking & Resources
- Response & Recovery
- Communications & Messaging

Each section contains strategic guidance, implementation best practices, and practical tools designed as a key resource that can grow with the organization over time.

Our mission is clear: **to save lives across the construction industry by prioritizing our colleagues' mental health as much as their physical safety.** Together, we are equipping construction craft and industry professionals and their organizations with the tools to take care of themselves and support their workforce—because every life matters, and every conversation counts.

[1] Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Suicide Data and Statistics. (2024, October 29). Suicide Prevention; https://www.cdc.gov/suicide/facts/data.html

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# LEADERSHIP, POLICY & CULTURE

## BUILD THE CULTURE THAT PROTECTS MIND SAFETY

### Leadership Commitment

Leadership commitment is essential to integrating suicide prevention into everyday work. When leaders publicly prioritize mental health alongside physical safety, they set expectations for behavior, communication, and support.

**LEADERSHIP COMMITMENT SHOULD BE:**

- Visible and consistently reinforced through words and actions
- Embedded into safety and operational practices

When leaders speak openly about suicide prevention and model it through policies, training, and daily decisions, the stigma around help-seeking for mental health is reduced and mental health conversations become normalized.

***TAKE ACTION***

- *When your organization or local union is ready to make a formal commitment, use the **Leadership Commitment Statement Template** as a starting point and adapt it to reflect your workplace, culture, and structure.*

### Defining Roles & Accountability

Suicide prevention is a shared responsibility that requires clear ownership across functions. Without defined roles, efforts can become inconsistent, siloed, or dependent on a single person.

**ORGANIZATIONS SHOULD CLARIFY RESPONSIBILITIES ACROSS ROLES, INCLUDING:**

- **Executive Leadership:** visible commitment, resource allocation, and setting organizational expectations.
- **Corporate Support:** policies, benefits, confidentiality protections, and accommodations
- **Safety Professionals:** integration into safety meetings, orientations, and incident response procedures
- **Field Leadership:** daily culture, early identification of concerns, and connecting workers to support
- **Craft professionals:** participating in awareness training, checking in on coworkers, knowing available resources, and seeking help when needed
- **Union & Industry Representatives:** championing prevention through labor-management channels, Member Assistance Program (MAP) program oversight, and member communications

***TAKE ACTION***

- *Apply the **Roles and Responsibilities Template** alongside the **RACI Matrix Template** to assign ownership, reduce confusion, and ensure coordinated action during prevention efforts and crisis response.to assign ownership, reduce confusion, and ensure coordinated action during prevention efforts and crisis response.*

## Integrating Suicide Prevention into Policies & Systems

Clear, written guidance provides structure and consistency for suicide prevention efforts. Integrating mental health protections into existing safety programs, HR policies, and supervisory practices helps ensure expectations are understood, and responses are coordinated.

**ORGANIZATIONS SHOULD REVIEW AND UPDATE EXISTING POLICIES AND PRACTICES TO ENSURE THEY ADDRESS:**

- Training and education on suicide prevention
- Confidentiality and disclosure guidance
- Procedures for responding when a worker discloses distress or when concerns are observed
- Expectations for supervisors during and after a mental health crisis
- Support for returning to work following a mental health leave or crisis
- Organizational response following the suicide death of an employee

***TAKE ACTION***

- *Work with HR, safety, and legal stakeholders to review existing policies against this list and identify gaps. Document updates and establish a regular review cycle.*

## Strengthening Connection & Belonging

Connection and belonging are key protective factors in preventing suicide. Workplaces where people know one another are more likely to notice changes and step in early. Connection extends beyond the workplace. Family members and loved ones often play an important role in recognizing concerns, encouraging help-seeking, and supporting recovery.

**ORGANIZATIONS CAN STRENGTHEN CONNECTION BY:**

- Pairing new hires with experienced workers
- Supporting peer mentorship and informal support networks
- Conducting intentional check-ins with traveling or rotating workers
- Engaging or establishing Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) as peer channels for mental health awareness, connection, and resource sharing. Organizations without ERGs can achieve similar goals through peer mentorship, crew check-ins, or informal support networks.

***TAKE ACTION***

- *Identify opportunities within onboarding, mentorship, and work planning to intentionally build connections and maintain engagement across jobsites.*

## Preparing for Crisis & Suicide Loss

How an organization responds in a crisis, and in the aftermath of a suicide loss, has a direct impact on worker safety, team cohesion, and long-term recovery. Preparation before a crisis occurs is what makes a coordinated, compassionate response possible.

### ESTABLISH & MAINTAIN A WRITTEN CRISIS RESPONSE PLAN

Every organization needs clear procedures to support workers in need. The crisis response plan should define:

- Roles and responsibilities during a crisis event
- Internal notification procedures
- When and how to involve 988 or emergency services
- Immediate safety steps, including staying with the individual and reducing access to lethal means when safely possible
- Expectations for documentation and follow-up

Organizations may assign responsibilities differently based on their size and structure. In smaller organizations, a single leader may oversee multiple aspects of the response plan. Larger organizations may distribute responsibilities across HR, safety, operations, communications, and executive leadership.

Protocols should be reviewed regularly and practiced in advance. Clear procedures ensure the response is consistent, coordinated, and centered on the person in distress. Be prepared to support both those at risk and those affected by a loss.

***TAKE ACTION***

- *Be sure your organization has a response plan. See **Building a Response Plan for Incidents of Mental Health Crisis in the Construction Industry Workplace** for a template response plan. This can be modified to align with your organization's structure, culture, and roles. Available in English | Spanish*

### RESPONDING IN THE AFTERMATH OF A SUICIDE

When a construction workplace experiences the loss of a worker by suicide, project managers, site safety professionals, union stewards, and other leaders are immediately faced with operational challenges, emotional trauma among themselves and team members, and possible media attention.

***TAKE ACTION***

- *Ensure appropriate support for workers affected by a suicide loss.* The ***After a Suicide: A Toolkit for Construction Workplaces*** *includes practical guidance and ready-to-use communication templates for leadership and workforce response. Available in English | Spanish*

# TRAINING

## EQUIP EVERY PERSON IN THE WORKPLACE

Training is how awareness becomes action. Becoming trained in suicide prevention steps does not require clinical expertise — it requires awareness, confidence, and clarity about what to do next. This section organizes training into two levels: awareness training for all workers, and advanced training for those taking on greater responsibility.

### Awareness Training

All workers and supervisors should have a baseline understanding of suicide risk in construction, how to recognize warning signs, and how to connect a co-worker to help. Awareness training does not require extended time commitments and can be integrated into existing safety programs.

When your organization is ready to establish a shared baseline of understanding, integrate awareness training into existing safety meetings, orientations, and Toolbox Talks. Hard Hat Courage Toolbox Talks are brief, scripted discussion guides designed to keep mental health and suicide prevention visible on the jobsite. They do not require a mental health background and can be completed in 5-15 minutes as part of a regular safety briefing.

***TAKE ACTION***

- *Bring Talk Saves Lives: An Introduction to Suicide Prevention in the Construction Industry to your workplace — construction-specific awareness program available in English and Spanish. Offered in 30 or 60 minute formats, virtual or in person, and accessible through National Center for Construction Education and Research (NCCER).*
- *Keep mental health and suicide prevention visible on every jobsite and in every workplace with Hard Hat Courage Toolbox Talks.*

### Advanced & Specialized Training

Advanced training goes beyond awareness to build the confidence and skills to act when someone is in crisis: the ability to ask directly about suicide, intervene with someone at risk, and connect them to help in the moment. This level of training is recommended for field leadership (e.g., supervisors, foremen, etc.), and HR and safety professionals.

Unlike awareness training, advanced training is skills-based and typically requires a greater time commitment ranging from a few hours to two days depending on the program. It is designed to be hands-on, using practice scenarios and guided conversation frameworks to build real competency.

Just as the construction industry follows a benchmark of 1 safety officer for every 50 workers, construction workplaces should apply the same risk-based thinking to mental health training. Identify supervisors, safety staff, HR professionals, and champions who may need advanced, skills-based training.

***TAKE ACTION***

- *Build supervisor and manager confidence and capability with LEAD: Hard Hat Courage Supervisor Training, a skills-based program developed for the construction industry context.*

# HELP-SEEKING & RESOURCES

## MAKE SUPPORT VISIBLE, ACCESSIBLE, AND TRUSTED

Even in the strongest workplace cultures, people experience mental health challenges. This section provides guidance on how to support someone who is struggling, with a clear path to help that is trusted and easy to access before a crisis occurs.

Access goes beyond availability to ensure workers know about resources, trust them, and can reach them quickly when needed.

### Create an Easy Access Hub for Employees

Workers should be able to access all relevant mental health and crisis resources in one place. A centralized hub removes barriers by eliminating the need to navigate multiple systems, portals, or contacts to find help.

**THE HUB SHOULD BE:**

- **Mobile-accessible.** Ensure resources are available by phone and integrated into digital safety platforms for job safety analysis and training
- **Comprehensive.** Include EAP or MAP and other employer/membership benefits information, crisis resources, workplace procedures for disclosing a concern, and contact information for HR and safety contacts
- **Current.** Designate someone responsible for keeping resources up to date, including verifying that phone numbers and links are always active and relevant
- **Promoted consistently.** Ensure that the resource hub is known and easily accessible. Build promotion into onboarding, Toolbox Talks, team huddles, and regular safety communications

### Reinforce Help-Seeking Pathways

Workers need to know where to turn and trust that help won't jeopardize their job. Clearly define and communicate multiple access points.

**ACCESS POINTS INCLUDE:**

- Internal HR or safety contacts
- EAPs and MAPs
- The 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline
- Local mental health and substance use providers
- Community-based support

***TAKE ACTION***

- *Improve access to mental health and crisis resources by implementing consistent posting standards across worksites — what to post, where to post it, and how to keep information up to date across worksites. See the Messaging & Templates section of the Appendix for guidance.*
- *Use Hard Hat Courage Toolbox Talks to keep help-seeking resources and pathways visible and top of mind on the jobsite and in the workplace.*
- *Display mental health and suicide prevention posters and flyers – including **Hard Hat Courage Workplace Posters** (available in English | Spanish) and the OSHA jobsite poster **"Suicide Prevention in Construction: 5 Things You Should Know,"** (available in English | Spanish) across jobsites and shared spaces.*

# COMMUNICATIONS & MESSAGING

## COMMUNICATING TO SAVE LIVES

Effective communication is both a prevention tool and a responsibility. How an organization talks about mental health and suicide – from language, the channels used to communicate, and the moments to show support – shapes culture, trust, and behavior across the workforce.

### Safe Messaging: What It Is & Why It Matters

Safe Messaging refers to communicating about mental health and suicide in ways that reduce risk and prevent harm. It is not about avoiding the topic; it is about addressing it responsibly.

**SAFE MESSAGING PRACTICES INCLUDE:**

- Using person-first language that reduces stigma (e.g., “died by suicide” rather than “committed suicide”)
- Protecting the privacy of individuals who have experienced a mental health crisis or suicide loss
- Avoiding graphic or detailed descriptions of methods or circumstances
- Discouraging speculation or rumors following an incident
- Consistently reinforcing available help-seeking resources such as 988 and EAP/MAP in all relevant communications
- Framing mental health challenges as common and treatable, and suicide as something that can often be prevented

Safe Messaging applies in every communication context: supervisor conversations, Toolbox Talks, internal announcements, social media posts, casual conversations with coworkers, and responses to incidents or losses.

***TAKE ACTION***

- *Guide workplace communications with the AFSP Safe Messaging Guidelines, which outlines how to talk about mental health and suicide in ways that reduce risk, protect privacy, and reinforce help-seeking.*
- *Audit existing communications (safety talks, onboarding materials, social media) for alignment with Safe Messaging principles.*

### Communication Channels

Suicide prevention messaging is most effective when it is reinforced through the same channels construction workplaces already use to communicate about safety, operations, and expectations. Relying on a single channel risks missed messages, especially in environments with rotating crews, multiple jobsites, and limited technology access.

**ORGANIZATIONS SHOULD USE A MIX OF CHANNELS, INCLUDING:**

- **Jobsite and field-based channels:** Toolbox Talks, safety meetings, flyers, huddles, and signage in shared spaces
- **Leadership and supervisory channels:** Messages from executives, project managers, superintendents, foremen, **and union leaders that model commitment and set expectations**
- **Peer and informal networks:** Crew-level conversations, mentorship relationships, trusted coworkers, and Employee Resource Groups (ERGs)
- **Digital and internal platforms:** Mobile tools, intranet portals, texts, learning management platforms, owned and shared social media platforms, and email
- **External or family-facing communications (as appropriate):** Materials that extend awareness beyond the jobsite, like mailers

Using multiple channels increases visibility, reinforces consistency, and helps ensure messages reach workers regardless of role, schedule, or location.

***TAKE ACTION***

- *Identify the primary communication channels used across jobsites and functions*
- *Reinforce key messages across more than one channel whenever possible.*
  - *For example, a message about available support resources may be shared during a Toolbox Talk, posted on the jobsite bulletin board, included in a supervisor's communication, and distributed through email or text messaging. Clarify expectations for supervisors and leaders as messengers, not just information distributors.*
    - *Supervisors and leaders should be prepared to briefly reinforce key messages, normalize help-seeking, remind workers of available resources, and model safe messaging language during safety meetings, huddles, and one-on-one conversations.*

## Key Communication Moments

In construction workplaces, when communication happens matters as much as how. Certain routine and high-stress moments create natural opportunities to reinforce prevention, normalize help-seeking, and direct workers to support.

**ORGANIZATIONS SHOULD PLAN FOR COMMUNICATION DURING:**

- Daily and weekly operational moments: Safety meetings, shift starts, stretch and flex, team huddles
- Employment lifecycle moments: Onboarding, promotions, role changes, trainings, jobsite transitions
- High stress or high-risk periods: Schedule demands, injuries, return-to-work, layoffs, or major project changes
- Team and organizational transitions: Crew changes, leadership turnover, or restructuring
- Organization-wide moments: Construction Safety Week (May), company town halls, Mental Health Awareness Month (May), and Suicide Prevention Awareness Month (September)

Anticipating these moments allows organizations to prepare language, identify messengers, and ensure resources are visible before a crisis occurs.

***TAKE ACTION***

- *Identify recurring operational and lifecycle moments where brief mental health messages can be integrated and use the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) Suicide Prevention Awareness Month Toolkit, and **Construction Suicide Prevention Week (CSPW) resources** to support planned, organization-wide communications.*
- *Increase visibility of support resources during high-stress periods, using materials from the 988 Partner Toolkit and the Veterans Crisis Line Toolkit to reinforce crisis and help-seeking information across jobsites and communication channels.*
- *Consider opportunities to share mental health and suicide prevention resources with workers' families through home mailers, benefits communications, family events, or other household-facing communications. Family members are often among the first to notice signs of distress and can play an important role in encouraging support-seeking.*

# APPENDIX:
## TEMPLATES & QUICK REFERENCE RESOURCES

### Getting Started

The following documents provide organizational infrastructure for your Hard Hat Courage prevention program. Complete or adapt to reflect your workplace structure, culture, and roles before beginning implementation.

- **IMPLEMENTATION ROADMAP**
  A practical planning and tracking tool that outlines the core actions needed to build and sustain a workplace suicide prevention program. Use the checklist to assess progress, assign responsibilities, and guide implementation across each section of the Hard Hat Courage Implementation Toolkit.

- **LEADERSHIP COMMITMENT STATEMENT TEMPLATE**
  A customizable template for organizations and local unions to issue a formal public commitment to mental health and suicide prevention. Adapt language to reflect your workplace, culture, and structure.

- **ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES TEMPLATE**
  A reference table summarizing how prevention responsibilities are shared across six organizational roles – Executive Leadership, Corporate Support, Safety Professionals, Field Leadership, Craft Professionals, and Union & Industry Representatives – across each section of this toolkit.

- **RACI MATRIX**
  A responsibility assignment matrix mapping specific prevention and crisis response tasks to roles across the organization. Use it alongside the Roles & Responsibilities Template to assign clear ownership and reduce confusion.

## Implementation Roadmap

The Implementation Roadmap is intended to help organizations translate the guidance in this toolkit into action. Use it as a planning and tracking tool to identify priorities, assign ownership, and monitor progress over time. Organizations may adapt or phase implementation based on their size, structure, and available resources.

| ✓ | Action Item |
|---|---|
| **Leadership, Policy & Culture** | |
| ☐ | Create a formal **Leadership Commitment Statement** (sample language which can be adapted to reflect your workplace, culture, and structure). |
| ☐ | Assign and communicate **Roles and Responsibilities (see template** and **RACI Matrix Template)** to assign clear ownership for prevention efforts and crisis response. |
| ☐ | Review and update existing policies and practices to address:<br>• training on suicide prevention<br>• confidentiality and disclosure guidance<br>• procedures for responding to disclosed distress<br>• supervisor expectations during and after a crisis<br>• return-to-work support<br>• organizational response to a suicide death |
| ☐ | Identify opportunities within onboarding, mentorship, and work planning to intentionally build connections and maintain engagement across jobsites and in the workplace. |
| ☐ | Review ***Building a Response Plan for Incidents of Mental Health Crisis*** in the Construction Industry Workplace and use it to build a response plan aligned with your organization's structure, culture, and roles. Available in **English \| Spanish** |
| ☐ | Ensure appropriate support for workers affected by a suicide loss with ***After a Suicide: A Toolkit for Construction Workplaces***, which includes practical guidance and ready to use communication templates for leadership and workforce response. Available in **English \| Spanish** |
| **Training** | |
| ☐ | Schedule ***Talk Saves Lives: An Introduction to Suicide Prevention in the Construction Industry*** for workers and supervisors. |
| ☐ | Integrate **Hard Hat Courage Toolbox Talks** into regular safety meeting rotations to keep mental health and suicide prevention visible on the jobsite. |
| ☐ | Identify field leadership (e.g. supervisors, foremen, etc.), managers, and safety professionals who require advanced training and enroll them in ***LEAD: Hard Hat Courage Supervisor Training.*** |

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| ✓ | Action Item |
|---|---|
| **Help-Seeking & Resources** | |
| ☐ | Establish a centralized, mobile-accessible resource hub that includes employer/membership benefits information, Employee Assistance Programs (EAP) or Member Assistance Programs (MAP) information, crisis resources, workplace disclosure procedures, and HR and safety contacts. |
| ☐ | Designate a person responsible for keeping the resource hub current, including verifying active phone numbers and links. |
| ☐ | Incorporate resource hub promotion into onboarding, Toolbox Talks, regular safety communications, and team huddles. |
| ☐ | Clearly communicate multiple help-seeking access points: HR and safety contacts, benefits such as EAP/MAP, 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline, local resources, and community-based support. |
| ☐ | Draft and adopt **sample messaging** to systematize what to post, where to post it, and how to maintain it. |
| ☐ | Use **Hard Hat Courage Toolbox Talks** to keep help-seeking resources and pathways visible and top of mind on jobsite and in the workplace. |
| ☐ | Display mental health and suicide prevention posters and flyers – including **Hard Hat Courage Workplace Posters** (available in **English \| Spanish**) and the OSHA jobsite poster **"Suicide Prevention in Construction: 5 Things You Should Know,"** (Available in **English \| Spanish**) across jobsites and shared spaces. |
| **Communications & Maessaging** | |
| ☐ | Review AFSP **Safe Messaging Guidelines** and share with all staff. |
| ☐ | Audit existing communications (safety talks, onboarding materials, social media) for alignment with Safe Messaging principles. |
| ☐ | Establish a protocol for responding to media inquiries following a crisis or suicide death, including identifying an authorized spokesperson, using Safe Messaging principles, protecting privacy, and preparing approved talking points in advance. (see ***After a Suicide: A Toolkit for Construction Workplaces***) |
| ☐ | Identify the primary communication channels used across jobsites and functions. |
| ☐ | Reinforce key messages across more than one channel whenever possible. For example, a message about available support resources may be shared during a Toolbox Talk, posted on the jobsite bulletin board, included in a supervisor communication, and distributed through email or text messaging. |
| ☐ | Clarify expectations for supervisors and leaders as messengers, not just information distributors. |
| ☐ | Identify recurring operational and lifecycle moments where brief mental health messages can be integrated. See **Messaging & Templates** |
| ☐ | Increase visibility of support resources during high-stress periods, using materials from the 988 Partner Toolkit and the Veterans Crisis Line Toolkit to reinforce crisis and help-seeking information across jobsites and communication channels. |

## Leadership Commitment Statement Template

A customizable template for organizations and local unions to issue a formal public commitment to mental health and suicide prevention. Adapt language to reflect your workplace, culture, and structure.

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***[COMPANY NAME/LOGO]***

**Commitment to Mental Health, Wellbeing, and Suicide Prevention in Construction**

At [COMPANY NAME], the safety, health, and wellbeing of our workforce is our highest priority. This commitment extends beyond preventing physical injuries on the jobsite—our responsibility includes protecting and supporting the mental health of every employee, craft professional, and partner who comes to work with us.

The construction industry faces unique pressures, including demanding schedules, high stress environments, and a culture that has historically discouraged conversations about emotional wellbeing. We recognize that these factors contribute to elevated rates of mental health challenges and suicide risk within our industry. As leaders, we acknowledge this reality and take responsibility for fostering a work environment where every individual feels safe, valued, and supported.

**Our Core Beliefs**

We affirm the following principles:

- Mental health is critical to workplace safety. Mental health and emotional wellbeing directly influence focus, decision-making, and overall safety performance.
- Every life matters. Suicide can be preventable and every employee deserves access to help, hope, and resources.
- Leadership sets the tone. We commit to modeling behaviors that promote openness, respect, and empathy.
- Stigma has no place in our company. Seeking help is a sign of strength, and we will actively work to eliminate shame and misunderstanding related to mental health.

**Our Commitments**

To demonstrate our leadership and accountability, [COMPANY NAME] commits to the following actions:

**1. Build a Culture of Safety, Support, and Inclusiveness**

- Promote a culture where mental health is openly discussed and prioritized.
- Encourage all employees to speak up without fear of judgment or retaliation.
- Integrate mental health and suicide prevention into our broader safety culture and safety planning.

**2. Provide Training, Education, and Awareness**

- Implement evidence informed training such as the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention *Talk Saves Lives: Construction, LEAD: Hard Hat Courage Supervisor Training,* etc.
- Equip leaders, supervisors, and craft professionals with the skills to recognize warning signs and respond appropriately.
- Share educational materials, toolbox talks, and regular communication to raise awareness.

**3. Expand Access to Support and Resources**

- Provide employees with clear, easy access to mental health services, Employee Assistance Programs (EAP), crisis lines, and community resources.
- Establish confidential channels for seeking support and reporting concerns.
- Partner with organizations that specialize in mental health and suicide prevention in construction.

**4. Promote Work Environments That Reduce Stress and Strengthen Wellbeing**

- Promote team connection and peer support programs on jobsites.
- Reinforce inclusion and connectedness in the workplace.

**5. Lead by Example**

- Executive leaders and managers will actively participate in mental health initiatives.
- We will review progress regularly and adjust our program to meet evolving needs.
- Leaders will practice empathetic communication and encourage others to do the same.

**Our Call to Action**

We ask every employee, from senior executives to apprentices, to join us in building a workplace where no one feels alone, where it is safe to ask for help, and where every individual is supported in both their work and mental health.

Together, we can strengthen our workforce and save lives.

Signed,

[NAME]

[TITLE]

## Roles & Responsibilities Template

A reference table summarizing how prevention responsibilities are shared across six organizational roles – Executive Leadership, Corporate Support, Safety Professionals, Field Leadership, Craft Professionals, and Union & Industry Representatives – across each section of this toolkit.

| Role | Leadership, Policy & Culture | Training | Help-Seeking & Resources | Response Planning for Crisis & Suicide Loss | Communications & Messaging |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Executive Leadership**<br>*C-suite, owners, presidents, VPs, and senior union officers* | Issue a Leadership Commitment Statement.<br><br>Allocate budget and staff time to prevention efforts.<br><br>Set expectations for supervisors and managers to actively support prevention efforts.<br><br>Link mental health and suicide prevention to the organization's mission and safety consistent leadership. | Sponsor and participate in trainings.<br><br>Set the expectation that all workers complete required training.<br><br>Promote training opportunities across the organization. | Ensure adequate mental health benefits and EAP/MAP coverage.<br><br>Publicly reinforce that help-seeking is encouraged and protected. | Ensure crisis protocols exist, are resourced, and reviewed regularly.<br><br>Support affected workers following a crisis. | Communicate organization-wide messaging using Safe Messaging practices.<br><br>Set the tone for all internal communications. |
| **Corporate Support**<br>*HR, Finance, Communications/Marketing, Legal, and other corporate functions* | Develop and update policies.<br><br>Integrate mental health protections into safety and HR systems.<br><br>Manage EAP/MAP program relationships.<br><br>Ensure confidentiality and disclosure procedures are clearly documented and communicated. | Coordinate and track training completion.<br><br>Integrate suicide prevention into new hire orientation and ongoing safety programs. | Maintain and post resource materials.<br><br>Ensure EAP/MAP benefits are current and accessible.<br><br>Keep the resource hub up to date, including verifying active phone numbers and links.<br><br>Manage accommodations and return-to-work support. | Develop and maintain a written crisis response plan.<br><br>Coordinate immediate organizational response.<br><br>Lead postvention support efforts. | Draft internal communications.<br><br>Ensure all messaging follows Safe Messaging guidelines.<br><br>Manage posting materials and distribution. |
| **Field Leadership**<br>*Supervisors, foremen, crew leaders, project managers, and superintendents* | Model that help-seeking is a sign of strength.<br><br>Build trust on the jobsite.<br><br>Reinforce expectations for mental health as part of daily safety culture. | Complete all required awareness and advanced training.<br><br>Deliver Toolbox Talks and reinforce prevention awareness in daily interactions. | Know available resources.<br><br>Direct workers to appropriate support. Practice warm handoffs; accompany workers to make first contact with support resources. | Follow and execute crisis response protocols.<br><br>Stay engaged with workers following a crisis. Communicate carefully and protect confidentiality. | Use Safe Messaging in daily conversations and jobsite communications.<br><br>Deliver scripted communications. Escalate concerns appropriately. |

| Role | Leadership, Policy & Culture | Training | Help-Seeking & Resources | Response Planning for Crisis & Suicide Loss | Communications & Messaging |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | Confirm physical awareness materials are posted. | | |
| **Safety Professionals**<br>*Safety managers, EHS staff, site safety officers, and loss prevention personnel* | Integrate suicide prevention into safety meetings, orientations, and incident response procedures.<br><br>Support the identification and onboarding of peer resources. | Deliver and coordinate awareness and skills-based training.<br><br>Integrate suicide prevention Toolbox Talks into regular safety meeting rotations.<br><br>Track training completion. | Ensure mental health and crisis resources are posted and accessible across jobsites.<br><br>Confirm physical materials are visible and current.<br><br>Build resource promotion into safety communications. | Implement crisis response protocols.<br><br>Coordinate immediate response on site.<br><br>Support postvention efforts and documentation. | Reinforce Safe Messaging standards in safety communications.<br><br>Ensure Toolbox Talks and jobsite messaging align with established guidelines. |
| **Craft Professionals**<br>*Journeyworkers, apprentices, laborers, and all hourly fieldworkers* | Participate in culture-building efforts.<br><br>Notice when a coworker seems to be struggling and check in.<br>Seek help when needed. | Complete required awareness training(s).<br><br>Engage in Toolbox Talks. | Know where resources are and how to access them.<br><br>Support coworkers who may be struggling.<br>Practice warm handoffs when able. | Know the basics of crisis response.<br><br>Know how to reach 988.<br><br>Support coworkers in distress. | Use person-first language.<br><br>Share resources.<br><br>Engage in open, supportive conversations. |
| **Union & Leadership Representatives**<br>*Union stewards, business agents, and trade association representatives* | Champion mental health and suicide prevention as a labor-management priority.<br><br>Incorporate prevention expectations into contract language, onboarding, and member communications.<br><br>Reduce stigma through visible union leadership. | Promote and sponsor training for members.<br><br>Support integration of awareness training<br><br>into union-based education programs.<br><br>Endorse skills-based training for stewards and field leaders. | Ensure Member Assistance Program (MAP) information is current, accessible, and communicated to members.<br><br>Reinforce that help-seeking is protected and encouraged.<br><br>Collaborate with employers on shared resource hubs. | Support affected members and their families following a crisis or suicide loss.<br><br>Coordinate with employers on postvention communications.<br><br>Know how to connect members to MAP and crisis resources. | Use Safe Messaging in member communications and official union channels.<br><br>Reinforce available resources through steward networks and industry association platforms. |

## RACI Matrix Template

A responsibility assignment matrix mapping specific prevention and crisis response tasks to roles across the organization. Use it alongside the Roles & Responsibilities Template to assign clear ownership and reduce confusion.

| A = Accountable | R = Responsible | C = Consulted | I = Informed | A/R = A single person is both Accountable (owns the outcome) and Responsible (does the work) |
|---|---|---|---|---|

*Note: Accountable = owns the outcome and is ultimately answerable for its success. Responsible = does the work to complete the task. Multiple people can be Responsible, but only one person can be Accountable.*

| Responsibility | Executive Leadership | Corporate Support | Safety Professionals | Field Leadership | Craft Professionals | Union & Industry Representatives |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Leadership, Policy & Culture** | | | | | | |
| Issue Leadership Commitment Statement | A | C | C | I | I | C |
| Allocate budget and staff time | A | R | C | I | I | C |
| Set expectations for managers and supervisors | A | C | R | I | I | I |
| Link mental health to mission and safety goals | A/R | C | C | I | I | R |
| Reduce stigma through visible leadership | A/R | C | R | R | R | R |
| Develop and update policies | A | R | C | C | I | C |
| Integrate mental health into safety systems | A | R | R | C | I | I |
| Build trust and culture on the jobsite | A | C | C | R | R | C |
| **Training** | | | | | | |
| Set expectation all workers complete training | A | R | C | C | I | C |
| Promote training opportunities | A | R | R | C | I | R |
| Coordinate and deliver awareness training | A | R | R | C | I | C |
| Complete awareness training | A | R | R | R | R | R |
| Coordinate and deliver advanced training | A | R | R | C | I | C |
| Complete advanced training | A | R | R | R | I | C |
| Deliver Toolbox Talks | A | C | R | R | C | C |
| Reinforce awareness in daily interactions | A | C | C | R | R | R |
| **Help-Seeking & Resources** | | | | | | |
| Ensure adequate benefits and EAP/MAP coverage | A | R | I | I | I | R |
| Publicly reinforce help-seeking is encouraged | A/R | R | R | R | R | R |
| Create and maintain resource hub | A | R | R | C | I | C |
| Post and maintain physical materials | A | R | R | R | I | C |
| Practice warm handoffs | A | C | C | R | R | C |
| Know and access available resources | A | R | R | R | R | R |
| Communicate MAP/union benefit resources | A | C | I | I | I | R |
| **Response Planning for Crisis & Suicide Loss** | | | | | | |
| Develop and maintain crisis response plan | A | R | R | C | I | C |
| Ensure protocols are resourced and reviewed | A | R | R | C | I | I |
| Respond immediately to worker in crisis | A | C | R | R | R | C |
| Stay engaged after a crisis | A | R | C | R | R | R |
| Lead postvention support | A | R | R | C | I | R |
| Support affected workers and families | A | R | R | R | R | R |
| Know basics of crisis response and 988 | A | R | R | R | R | R |
| **Communications & Messaging** | | | | | | |
| Set organization-wide messaging tone | A | R | C | I | I | C |
| Draft and distribute internal communications | A | R | R | C | I | C |
| Ensure Safe Messaging guidelines are followed | A | R | R | R | I | R |
| Deliver scripted jobsite communications | A | C | R | R | C | C |
| Use person-first language | A | R | R | R | R | R |
| Escalate concerns appropriately | A | R | R | R | R | R |

# MESSAGING & TEMPLATES

The toolkit provides the messaging resources and posting standards your organization needs to communicate clearly, consistently, and safely. It is designed for safety professionals, HR staff, supervisors, and others responsible for internal communications, jobsite messaging, and resource visibility.

- **CORE MESSAGING**
  Messages that reflect current, evidence-informed language for communicating about suicide prevention in the construction workplace. Use them across communications channels, adapted as needed to fit your organization's voice and context.

- **INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS TEMPLATES**
  Templates that support an internal rollout of Hard Hat Courage programs and ongoing suicide prevention communications. Adapt the language to reflect your organization's voice, structure, and culture.

- **EXTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS TEMPLATES**
  External communications about mental health should focus on your organization's own commitment and culture, not promoting specific programs. The sample messages are written from the perspective of a construction employer sharing their values publicly. Adapt them to fit your organization's voice, channels, and context.

- **MENTAL HEALTH & CRISIS RESOURCE VISIBILITY**
  Access to mental health and crisis support resources is a foundational part of a safe and supportive work environment. To promote early help-seeking and reduce barriers to support, certain resources should be consistently visible at all worksites and offices.

## Core Messaging

The following messages reflect current, evidence-informed language for communicating about suicide prevention in the construction workplace. Use them across communications channels, adapted as needed to fit your organization's voice and context.

### SUICIDE PREVENTION MESSAGES

- Suicide is a leading cause of death, and it can often be prevented
- Talk saves lives — whether you are experiencing suicidal thoughts, or you're concerned about someone, assume you are the only person who will reach out
- Asking directly about suicide and talking openly and honestly when we are worried about someone is an important first step. It can be the gateway to connecting those who are struggling to support
- Research tells us that trusting your instinct and asking someone directly if they're thinking about suicide can be lifesaving
- Together, we can encourage those who are struggling to seek help and to know they're not alone
- If you are in crisis or need guidance to help someone in crisis, please call or text 988 for the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline, or text TALK to the Crisis Text Line at 741741

### CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY CONTEXT

When communicating about suicide risk in construction, the following facts provide accurate, non-sensational context:

- The construction industry has one of the highest suicide rates in the United States compared to other industries
- While construction workers face the same risk factors for suicide as others, certain factors may be unique to the industry, including long hours, chronic pain, physical demands, frequent travel, family separation, cyclical layoffs, and financial stress
- Construction sites that include access to heights and heavy equipment can increase risk, particularly during a crisis period
- Suicide rates among males are generally higher across all industries. In construction, male suicide rates are twice as high as males in all other industries combined. Men make up the majority of the construction workforce
- Creating a work environment that fosters communication and respect can help protect against suicide risk
- Peer support and access to mental health care are important ways to reduce risk and build resilience

## Internal Communications Templates

The following templates support internal rollout of Hard Hat Courage programs and ongoing suicide prevention communications. Adapt the language to reflect your organization's voice, structure, and culture.

### TALK SAVES LIVES: CONSTRUCTION–PROGRAM INTRODUCTION

Use when introducing Talk Saves Lives: Construction to workers and supervisors:

**• About Talk Saves Lives: Construction**

Based on the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention's (AFSP) signature suicide prevention education program, *Talk Saves Lives: Construction* provides participants with life-saving knowledge and confidence critical to preventing suicide in the construction industry. Designed by and for construction industry professionals, this peer-to-peer program will provide an overview of suicide in the construction industry, risk factors and warning signs of suicide, and strategies to prevent it.

**• Sample Presentation Announcement**

Join us for *Talk Saves Lives: An Introduction to Suicide Prevention in the Construction Industry* to learn about the scope of suicide in construction, the research on prevention, and what you can do. Register here: [add event link or calendar reminder]

### TOOLBOX TALK ANNOUNCEMENT

Use when adding a Hard Hat Courage Toolbox Talk to a safety meeting.

**• Sample Announcement**

This [week/month], we're adding a mental health Toolbox Talk from AFSP's Hard Hat Courage initiative to our safety briefing. Just like we talk about physical safety, we want to make sure everyone knows how to recognize when a coworker might be struggling – and how to reach out.

### EAP/MAP REMINDER

Use to remind workers about available mental health benefits.

**• Sample Announcement**

A reminder that your [EMPLOYER/MEMBER] Assistance Program is available at no cost. [EAP/MAP NAME] provides confidential support for mental health, substance use, financial concerns, and more. Call [PHONE NUMBER] or visit [website] to connect with a counselor – 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. If you are in crisis or need guidance to help someone in crisis, please call or text 988 for the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline, or text TALK to the Crisis Text Line at 741741.

## EMPLOYEE RESOURCES GROUPS (ERGS)

ERGs can help extend mental health and suicide prevention messaging to workers who may be more receptive to support through peer and community channels. Share these templates with ERG leads and invite them to adapt and distribute to their members.

- **Sample ERG Member Announcement**

  At [ORGANIZATION/COMPANY NAME], we're committed to making sure every person on our team knows that support is available. As part of that commitment, we're sharing resources through [ERG NAME] to help make sure this message reaches you directly. If you or a coworker is struggling, you don't have to go it alone. [EAP/MAP NAME] is available at no cost. Call [phone number] or visit [website] to connect with a counselor – 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. If you are in crisis or need guidance to help someone in crisis, please call or text 988 for the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline, or text TALK to the Crisis Text Line at 741741.

- **Sample ERG Newsletter or Internal Post**

  Mental health is part of safety at [ORGANIZATION/COMPANY NAME]. This [MONTH/QUARTER], [ERG NAME] is helping spread the word about the resources available to you and your teammates. Every life matters. Every conversation counts. If you are in crisis or need guidance to help someone in crisis, please call or text 988 for the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline, or text TALK to the Crisis Text Line at 741741.

## CONSTRUCTION SAFETY WEEK & MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS MONTH (MAY)

May brings two overlapping moments: Construction Safety Week and Mental Health Awareness Month. Both are well-established moments when workers expect safety communications, making them well-suited for integrating mental health and suicide prevention messaging. Organizations already planning Construction Safety Week activities can incorporate it without creating a separate effort.

- The SAMHSA Mental Health Awareness Month Toolkit includes key messages and graphics for the organization's channels of communication
- Incorporate mental health messaging into safety meetings, onboarding, and regular communications throughout May
- Use external channels to reinforce that mental health is a workplace priority
- Visit Construction Safety Week for ready-to-use toolkits, themes, and materials to help plan your Construction Safety Week

## SUICIDE PREVENTION AWARENESS MONTH (SEPTEMBER)

September is Suicide Prevention Awareness Month—a time to raise awareness, promote hope, and normalize help-seeking. Use it to amplify existing communications and Construction Suicide Prevention Week offers another opportunity to join in the industry effort to prevent suicide. Register your organization's participation.

- The SAMHSA Suicide Prevention Awareness Month Toolkit includes messages, graphics, and promotional materials to fit the needs of the organization's audiences and channels of communication
- Reinforce key messages in safety meetings, Toolbox Talks, and display materials throughout September
- Connect all awareness communications to available resources: 988, EAP/MAP, and internal contacts
- Share publicly – via the company website, LinkedIn, or other external channels – that your organization is committed to mental health and suicide prevention in the workplace

## External Communications Templates

Construction organizations communicate externally through websites, social media, community events, and industry partnerships. These channels offer opportunities to demonstrate that your organization takes mental health seriously, which strengthens recruitment, retention, and community trust.

External communications about mental health should focus on your organization's own commitment and culture, not promoting specific programs. The sample messages below are written from the perspective of a construction employer sharing their values publicly. Adapt them to fit your organization's voice, channels, and context.

### COMMITMENT & CULTURE

- **Sample Social Media / Website**

  At [COMPANY/ORGANIZATION NAME], we believe that taking care of mental health is just as important as physical safety. We're committed to building a workplace where our people feel supported, connected, and empowered to ask for help when they need it.

  If you or someone you know is in crisis, you can also call or text the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline at 988.

- **Sample Job Posting or Recruitment Materials**

  [COMPANY/ORGANIZATION NAME] is committed to the health and safety of every person on our team — including mental health. We provide access to confidential support resources and a workplace culture that takes wellbeing seriously.

### AWARENESS MONTH MESSAGING (MAY & SEPTEMBER)

During Construction Safety Week and Mental Health Awareness Month (May) and Suicide Prevention Awareness Month (September), many organizations share public-facing messages. These samples are written for external audiences — workers' families, community members, industry partners, and the public.

- **Sample Construction Safety Week & Mental Health Awareness Month (May)**

  This May, we're recognizing both Construction Safety Week and Mental Health Awareness Month. At [COMPANY/ORGANIZATION NAME], safety means looking out for the whole person — on the job and off.

  If you are in crisis or need guidance to help someone in crisis, please call or text 988 for the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline, or text TALK to the Crisis Text Line at 741741.

  - **SAMHSA Mental Health Awareness Month Toolkit (May)**
    May is Mental Health Awareness Month. The toolkit includes key messages and graphics for organizational communications channels. **Access materials**

- **Sample Suicide Prevention Awareness Month (September)**

  September is Suicide Prevention Awareness Month. The construction industry has one of the highest suicide rates in the U.S. — and we're committed to changing that.

  Talking about it saves lives. If you are in crisis or need guidance to help someone in crisis, please call or text 988 for the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline, or text TALK to the Crisis Text Line at 741741.

  - **SAMHSA Suicide Prevention Awareness Month Toolkit (September)**
    September is Suicide Prevention Awareness Month — a time to raise awareness, promote hope, and normalize help-seeking. The toolkit includes messages, graphics, and promotional materials. **Access materials**

### CRISIS & HELP-SEEKING RESOURCES

Sharing crisis resources publicly — on social media, a company website, or in community-facing materials — reinforces that help is available and reduces barriers for workers, family members, and community members who may not know where to turn.

- **Sample 988 Awareness Post**

  If you are in crisis or need guidance to help someone in crisis, please call or text 988 for the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline, or text TALK to the Crisis Text Line at 741741. [ORGANIZATION NAME] is committed to mental health on and off the job.

- **Sample Industry Context Post**

  The construction industry has one of the highest suicide rates in the U.S. and we believe every life matters. At [COMPANY/ORGANIZATION NAME], we're committed to a workplace where no one struggles alone. If you are in crisis or need guidance to help someone in crisis, please call or text 988 for the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline, or text TALK to the Crisis Text Line at 741741.

## Mental Health & Crisis Resource Visibility

Access to mental health and crisis support resources is a foundational part of a safe and supportive work environment. To promote early help-seeking and reduce barriers to support, certain resources should be consistently visible at all worksites and offices.

### CORE RESOURCES TO POST

The following resources represent the minimum standard for mental health and crisis resource visibility and should be posted at all worksites and offices.

### NATIONAL RESOURCES

**988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline**

Free, confidential, 24/7 support. Call or text 988. For Spanish, press 2. For TTY users, dial 711 then 988. Learn more

- **988 Partner Toolkit**

  A collection of free, downloadable materials from SAMHSA to help organizations promote the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline across their workplaces and communities. **Access toolkit**

**Crisis Text Line**

Text HOME to 741741 to connect with a trained Crisis Counselor, free, 24/7. For Spanish, text AYUDA to 741741. **Learn more**

**Veterans Crisis Line**

For veterans and their families. Call 988 and press 1. Text 838255. Spanish: call 988 and press 2 first. TTY: dial 711 then 988. **Learn more**

- **Veterans Crisis Line Materials**

  Free resources to help raise awareness of the Veterans Crisis Line, particularly valuable for construction workplaces with veteran employees. **Access materials**

## COMPANY RESOURCES

### Company Employee Assistance Program (EAP)

Provider Name: _____

Phone: _____

Website: _____

Access Instructions: _____

### Internal Contact for Support (HR / Safety / Supervisor)

Name/Role: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

## UNION RESOURCES

### Member Assistance Program (MAP)

Provider Name: _____

Phone: _____

Website: _____

Access Instructions: _____

### Union Benefit Contact (if applicable)

Contact Name/Office: _____

Phone: _____

## LOCAL RESOURCES

Local Crisis or Community Resource (if applicable)

Organization Name: _____

Phone: _____

Website: _____

## WHERE TO POST

Resources should be posted in locations that are visible, accessible, and routinely visited. Designating consistent locations across jobsites and office environments helps ensure that individuals know where to look when they need support.

**Jobsites**

- Break trailers
- Portable restrooms
- Safety bulletin boards
- Time clock or sign-in areas
- Equipment check-out areas
- Inside safety binders or jobsite safety manuals

**Offices**

- Break rooms
- HR bulletin boards
- Reception or common areas
- Employee handbook
- Company intranet homepage
- Internal employee app (if available)

## VISIBILITY STANDARDS

Posting is not enough. Visibility must be intentional. Effective visibility practices ensure that resources are easy to read, available in commonly used languages, and positioned in ways that reduce barriers to access. These standards help ensure that individuals can locate support materials independently and discreetly, without needing to ask.

- Use large, readable font
- Provide materials in languages represented on the jobsite
- Post at eye level when possible
- Avoid overcrowding with unrelated notices
- Protect materials from weather or damage at outdoor sites
- Include QR codes linking to digital resources when possible

**Safe Messaging Reminder**
All posted materials should reflect respectful, stigma-reducing language. Refer to the AFSP Safe Messaging Guidelines for detailed communication guidance.

## IMPLEMENTATION ACCOUNTABILITY

Resource visibility must be assigned and maintained. Responsibility for implementation and maintenance should be designated to ensure postings remain accurate, accessible, and up to date.

**Ongoing Maintenance Checklist**

- Confirm phone numbers and websites remain active
- Replace damaged or removed postings
- Update materials when company benefits or contacts change
- Re-post when moving to new project locations

**Leadership Oversight**
Leadership plays an important role in reinforcing expectations around resource visibility. Regular awareness helps ensure that visibility practices remain consistent and supported across locations.

- Include visibility checks in safety audits
- Review annually as part of prevention program evaluation
- Reinforce expectations in leadership meetings

Consistent visibility of mental health and crisis resources signals that wellbeing and safety are ongoing priorities. When resources are easy to find and routinely maintained, they create an environment where individuals are more likely to seek support early and without barriers.

## AFSP Community Engagement

The following resources connect your organization to AFSP's community-based programs, events, and fundraising opportunities – ways to extend your commitment to suicide prevention beyond the jobsite.

### AFSP CHAPTER NETWORK

Connect with the local AFSP chapter for community-based suicide prevention resources, events, and support. **Learn more**

### CONSTRUCTION HIKE FOR HOPE

An annual fundraising hike bringing communities and the construction industry together in support of suicide prevention. A meaningful way to engage workers and demonstrate organizational commitment. **Learn more**

### OUT OF THE DARKNESS WALKS

Community fundraising walks that bring communities together in support of suicide prevention. **Learn more**

HARD HAT COURAGE

American Foundation for Suicide Prevention

HARDHATCOURAGE.COM