



Connecting to Hope

Suicide Prevention Awareness Month 2023 Toolkit
BHA Office of Suicide Prevention

INFORM
EDUCATE
TRAIN
CONNECT
SUSTAIN

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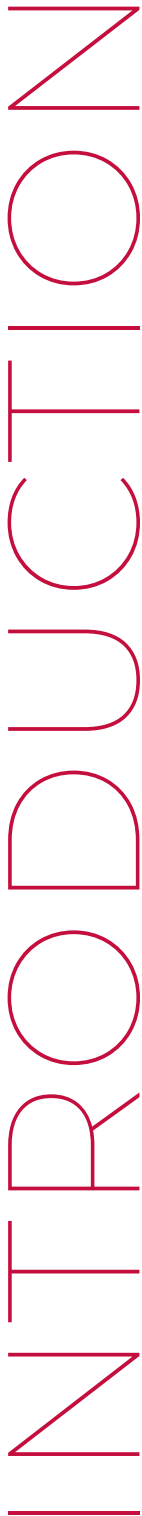
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Suicide is preventable. By building awareness and promoting care, Marylanders can make a difference.

This Suicide Prevention Awareness Month, Maryland is **connecting to hope**.

The Office of Suicide Prevention, housed in the Maryland Department of Health's Behavioral Health Administration, works year-round to promote mental wellbeing and prevent suicide. Every year, the office leads a campaign for Suicide Prevention Awareness Month that brings together partners and communicates essential information to the public.

Connecting to hope is a process that requires consistent effort and support. Focusing on hope emphasizes the opportunities for growth and recovery. Suicide is preventable. Through building awareness and essential skills, anyone can support people at risk.

This toolkit will...

- **INFORM** you by sharing important facts about suicide
- **EDUCATE** you about safety planning & lethal means safety
- **TRAIN** you through course offerings
- **CONNECT** you to suicide prevention organizations & resources
- **SUSTAIN** you with resources to care for yourself & others

Included in the toolkit are resources and media templates that can be shared widely. If you share any of our resources, you can tag us [@mdhsuicideprevention](#) on Instagram, [@mdhsuicideprevention](#) on Facebook, or [@mdhsuicideprev](#) on Twitter. Use **#ConnectingtoHope** in your posts to be part of the campaign!

At the end of the month, we invite you to join us for the 35th Annual Suicide Prevention Conference on October 4, 2023. You can register at <https://rb.gy/ol8m7>

Please reach out to mdh.suicideprevention@maryland.gov if you have any questions or feedback to share. Together, we can prevent suicide!

CONTENT OVERVIEW

This toolkit includes information, resources, and media that you can use during Suicide Prevention Awareness Month.

Included in the 2023 Toolkit

- > Suicide Prevention Awareness Month Calendar and Events
- > In Depth Sections
 - Inform
 - Educate
 - Train
 - Connect
 - Sustain
- > Social Media Posts
- > Factsheets

Key Events

Suicide Prevention Awareness Month Kickoff Webinar

Thursday, September 7 from 10:00 am - 11:30 am

Join the Office of Suicide Prevention and Dr. LaMarr Darnell Shields to kick off Suicide Prevention Awareness Month with an inspiring call to action. Dr. Shields will highlight the importance of self care and a message about connecting to hope. **Register today at bit.ly/3s9uTJ3.**

National Suicide Prevention Week

Sunday, September 10 - Saturday, September 16, 2023

This annual week is a campaign to inform the public about suicide prevention and the warning signs of suicide. During this week, we encourage you to share suicide prevention resources and stories of hope. Use **#ConnectingtoHope** in your posts to join the campaign!

Key Events

World Suicide Prevention Day

Sunday, September 10

World Suicide Prevention Day is a time to remember those affected by suicide, to raise awareness, and to focus efforts on directing treatment to those who need it most. Honoring this day is an annual worldwide commitment and action to prevent suicides, with various activities around the world since 2003.

Wear yellow to show your support.



Together We Care Summit

Thursday, September 28 from 8:00 am - 4:30 pm

This one-day event will be dedicated to supporting collaboration on suicide prevention, intervention, and postvention efforts between key partner organizations and suicide prevention coalitions across Maryland. This summit will take place in person in Greenbelt, Maryland.

Maryland's 35th Annual Suicide Prevention Conference

Wednesday, October 4 from 9:00 am - 5:00 pm

The Maryland Department of Health's Office of Suicide Prevention will be hosting the 35th Annual Suicide Prevention Conference via Zoom. The conference is sponsored in partnership with the University of Maryland Training Center. Please consider joining for a day of community and learning. 5.75 CEUs are available for psychologists, social workers, and counselors. **Register today at <https://rb.gy/ol8m7>**

SEPTEMBER 2023

	SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
INFORM	27	28 MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID TRAINING	29	30	31 WICOMICO OVERDOSE AWARENESS DAY	1	2
EDUCATE	3	4 LABOR DAY	5	6	7 SUICIDE PREVENTION MONTH KICK OFF WEBINAR	8	9 TRICOUNTY KICK OFF EVENT ARTHUR W. PERDUE STADIUM
NATIONAL SUICIDE PREVENTION WEEK - SEPTEMBER 10 THROUGH SEPTEMBER 16							
TRAIN	10 WORLD SUICIDE PREVENTION DAY	11	12 YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID	13 CARE TRAINING WITH THE TREVOR PROJECT	14 VETERANS AND MENTAL HEALTH: HELPING THOSE WHO HAVE SERVED	15	16 ROCK FOR RECOVERY OAKRIDGE BAPTIST CHURCH
CONNECT	17 MONTGOMERY COUNTY OUT OF DARKNESS WALK	18	19	20 GOVERNOR'S COMMISSION ON SUICIDE PREVENTION MEETING	21 POWER OF EXPRESSION	22 EVENING OF REFLECTION	23 OCEAN CITY OUT OF THE DARKNESS WALK
SUSTAIN	24	25	26	27	28	29 HARFORD COUNTY 4TH ANNUAL LIFE MATTERS CONFERENCE	30 CECIL COUNTY GATSBY GALA

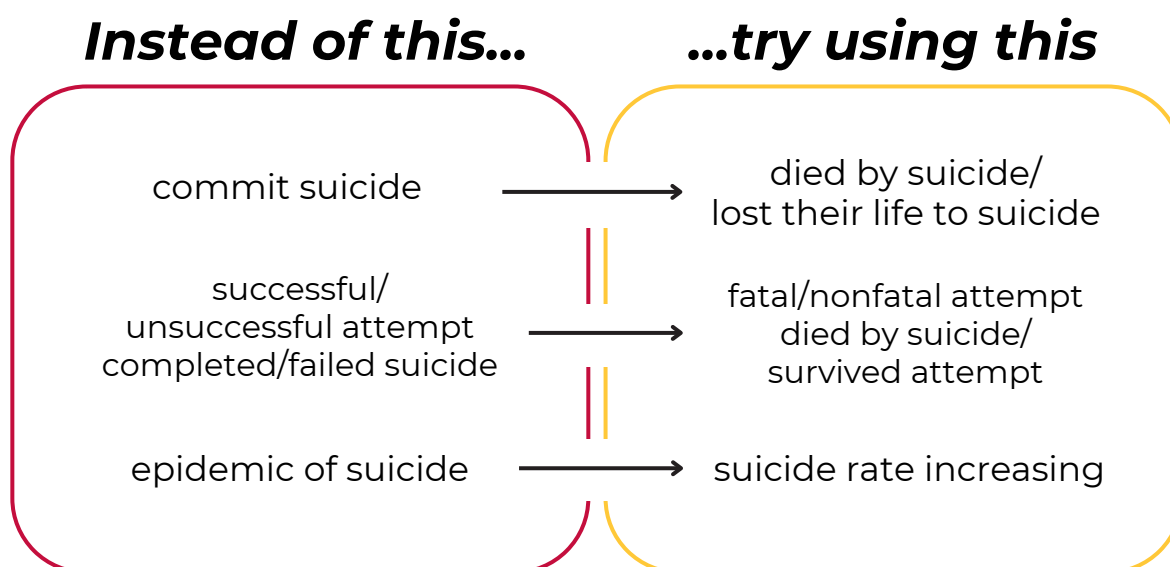
ADDITIONAL RESOURCES	UPCOMING EVENTS AND OUT OF THE DARKNESS WALKS
<p>SPRC - Suicide Prevention Month: Ideas for Action</p> <p>AFSP - We Can #StopSuicide</p> <p>SAMHSA - Suicide Prevention Resources</p> <p>NAMI - Suicide Prevention Awareness Month</p> <p>Zero Suicide - What's New Resources</p> <p>Yellow Ribbon - Suicide Prevention Program</p> <p>988 Lifeline - Get Involved</p> <p>American Association of Suicidology - 2023 World Suicide Prevention Benefit</p> <p>Army Resilience - Suicide Prevention Month</p>	<p>September 9 St. Mary's County Walk For Recovery</p> <p>September 9 Carroll County Out of the Darkness Walk</p> <p>September 17 Annapolis Out of the Darkness Walk</p> <p>September 30 Shatter the Stigma Wor-Wic Community College</p> <p>October 7, Hagerstown Out of the Darkness Walk</p> <p>October 14, Frederick Out of the Darkness Walk</p> <p>October 15, Southern Maryland Out of the Darkness Walk</p> <p>October 28, Baltimore Out of the Darkness Walk</p> <p>November 4, Havre de Grace Out of the Darkness Walk</p>

WORDS MATTER

How we communicate about suicide - in media, in messaging, and in personal conversations - makes a difference. As you share messages about suicide prevention, consider the impact of the language you use.

Avoid Stigmatizing Language

In general, avoid using language around suicide that reinforces negative stereotypes and prejudice. It's important to emphasize hope and recovery.



Report on Suicide Responsibly

Media coverage of suicide can be highly impactful. When suicide is sensationalized, it can contribute to increased risk of suicide in the community. When suicide is reported on responsibly, it can actually promote help-seeking for those at risk of suicide.



For more information

Visit the Reporting on Suicide website.
<https://reportingonsuicide.org/>

Visit the Canada Centre for Addiction and Mental Health Words Matter website.
<https://www.camh.ca/en/today-campaign/help-and-resources/words-matter>



INFORM

Accurate and current data can inform suicide prevention, providing evidence to fight stigma and misconceptions. Key data points highlight the impact of suicide in our communities.

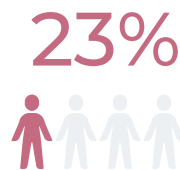
Suicide in Maryland: Data Snapshot

Between 2017-2021, an average of 634 Marylanders died by suicide annually. [1] In 2020, there were 11,520 years of potential life lost to suicide in Maryland. [2] It is estimated that a single suicide impacts an average of 135 people. [3]

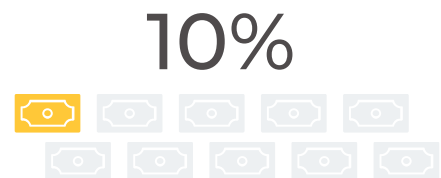
According to Maryland Violent Death Reporting Systems Data from 2003-2020, of the people who died by suicide... [7]



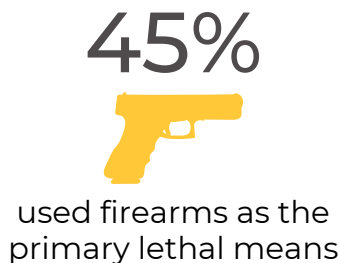
4/10
had ever been treated for mental health or substance use



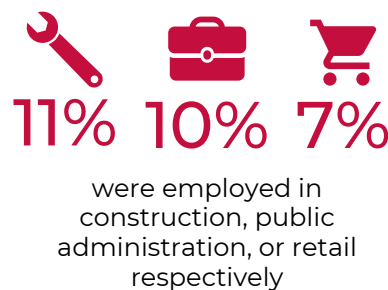
23%
had a problem with a current or former intimate partner. For 8%, an argument/conflict immediately preceded death.



10%
had a job problem and/or a financial problem



45%
used firearms as the primary lethal means



11% 10% 7%
were employed in construction, public administration, or retail respectively



19%
had served in the US Armed Forces.

Nationally, some communities and groups have elevated risk and/or increasing rates of suicide.

- In 2020, suicide was the 2nd leading cause of death for ages 10-14 and 25-34. Suicide was the 3rd leading cause of death for ages 15-24. [18]
- Older men ages 75+ have the highest rates of suicide compared to other age groups. [17]
- Suicide rates for Black youth are increasing. The national suicide rate for Black youth between ages 10-19 increased by 78% between 2000 and 2020. [4]
- In 2021, the racial/ethnicity group that had the highest rate of suicide in the US was American Indian and Alaska Native people. [5]
- 18% of LGBTQ youth between the ages of 13-17 attempted suicide in 2022. Percentages were higher for LGBTQ youth of color. [6]

Suicide is Preventable

Suicide can be a difficult subject to learn about, but many people have an incomplete or misinformed understanding of suicide. It's important to debunk myths about suicide. Stigma and misconceptions hinder open conversations that can be lifesaving. [15]

MYTH

Suicide can't be prevented.

FACT

Suicide is preventable. However, for someone at high risk of suicide, the decision to attempt suicide can happen in a matter of minutes. [8] If someone is displaying warning signs of suicide or worrisome changes in behavior, it is vital to connect them to help immediately.

MYTH

Once someone is suicidal, they will always remain suicidal.

FACT

Active suicidal ideation is usually time-limited. Research shows that the majority of individuals who survive a suicide attempt do not go on to die by suicide later in life. [16] An individual with suicidal thoughts and/or attempts can recover in the future.

MYTH

Asking someone about suicide directly will encourage them or "plant the idea" to attempt suicide.

FACT

Talking about suicide with someone who is struggling reduces the pressure or fear they may feel. Being open and non-judgmental will allow the person to share honestly, and can be the first step towards connecting to lifesaving help.

Asking the Question

It is important to ask directly about suicide, if you are worried about someone. If you aren't sure when to ask the question, keep an eye out for **warning signs**.



Talking About

- *Wanting to die or to kill oneself*
- *Looking for a way to kill oneself, such as searching online or obtaining a gun*
- *Feeling hopeless or having no reason to live*
- *Feeling trapped or in unbearable pain*
- *Feeling extremely guilty or ashamed*
- *Being a burden to others*

Behavior Change

- *Increasing the use of alcohol or drugs*
- *Losing interest in activities*
- *Acting anxious or agitated; behaving recklessly and irrationally*
- *Sleeping too little or too much*
- *Withdrawing or feeling isolated*
- *Showing rage or talking about seeking revenge*
- *Displaying extreme mood swings*
- *Sharp drop in performance*
- *Giving away possessions*

Warning signs can look different for every person. Ask about suicide directly:

“Are you thinking about suicide?”

“Are you thinking of killing yourself?”

“Are you thinking about ending your life?”

Avoid using less specific questions, like “are you thinking about hurting yourself?” or “you wouldn’t do anything drastic/stupid, would you?” You want to be direct to encourage openness and honesty.



If you are ever in a conversation about suicide, **Remember Your ABCDEs.**

Ask Directly. Asking someone directly, “are you thinking of suicide?” can be the open door to a conversation that they’ve been needing. Ask the person if they have a plan for suicide, and if they know what they would use to carry out their plan.

Be an Active Listener. Be there to listen with compassion and empathy. Avoid judgmental or dismissive statements. Let the person share their feelings and story. Do not jump to advice-giving, and stay calm.

Continue to Keep Them Safe. Do not leave someone alone if they are thinking about suicide. If applicable, remove what they planned to use (firearms, medications, etc.). If you think the person is in immediate danger, call or text 988. You can also take them to the nearest emergency room or crisis center.

Discuss Options and Connect to Help. Find out who they can reach out to for help, whether it’s a therapist, a doctor, friends or family. For additional support, call or text 988.

Encourage, Support, and Follow Up. Follow-up with the person in the days and weeks after the crisis to let them know you’re thinking of them.

Lived Experience of Suicide

People with lived experience of suicide include...

- Individuals who have experienced suicidal ideation, behaviors, or crisis
- Individuals who have survived a suicide attempt or multiple suicide attempts
- Individuals who have experienced a loss or losses to suicide

Involving individuals with lived experience in suicide prevention

- People who have attempted suicide or have been affected by a suicide death are at higher risk of suicide. Engaging them in their own care has been shown to reduce suicide risk.
- The insights of people with lived experience are extremely valuable in prevention planning, treatment, and education. This leads to improved care, enhanced safety, reduced suicide attempts and deaths, and improved support for loss and attempt survivors.
- The stories of individuals with lived experience are incredibly powerful, can help reduce suicide stigma, and can encourage help-seeking behavior.

After a suicide attempt or suicide loss

- *Engage in self-compassion and self-care.*
- *Seek help from a mental health professional and community resources.*
- *Talk to those you trust.*
- *Explore peer support options, including support groups.*
- *Develop a safety plan.*



For Attempt Survivors

Visit the 988 Lifeline Website.

<https://988lifeline.org/help-yourself/attempt-survivor>



For Loss Survivors

Visit the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention website.

<https://afsp.org/ive-lost-someone/>



EDUCATE

The Office of Suicide Prevention works in many areas related to suicide prevention. This Suicide Prevention Awareness Month, we focus on two key interventions (Safety Planning & Lethal Means Safety) that can make a big impact.

Safety Planning

A safety plan is a set of resources and instructions that can guide a person during a mental health or substance use crisis. This brief intervention can develop a concrete plan for supporting safety. Although there are clinical safety plans, there are also types of safety planning that can be done with loved ones or individually. Research points to safety planning being effective at reducing suicidal behavior for those who have been hospitalized for suicide-related concerns. [9]

What goes in a safety plan?

Safety planning typically includes identifying...

- Warning signs
- Internal coping strategies
- People and places that provide distraction
- People the individual can ask for help during a crisis
- Professionals or agencies the individual can contact during a crisis
- Plans to make the environment safer (lethal means planning)

How do I develop a safety plan?

Safety planning can be done independently, or can be done in partnership with a loved one or mental health professional. There are three important things to remember:

- **Safety planning should not be done during a crisis.** Planning should be done when an individual is stable and in a clear state of mind.
- **Safety plans are NOT contracts.** They are voluntary guidelines developed and driven by the person who is at risk of suicidal crisis.
- **Consulting with a clinician is recommended.** A clinician can provide additional insight and valuable resources. Remember, you can always call, text, or chat 988 for additional resources.



For Safety Plan Templates

Visit the My Safety Plan website to access a guided safety plan.

<https://www.mysafetyplan.org/>

Download the Suicide Safety Plan mobile app.

<https://suicidesafetyplan.app/>

Lethal Means Safety

Lethal means are objects (e.g., medications, firearms, sharp instruments) that can be used to seriously harm or kill oneself or others. "Lethal means safety" is an intentional, voluntary practice to reduce suicide risk by limiting access to lethal means.

Reducing access to lethal means is an important part of suicide prevention. The lethal means that a person decides to use during a suicidal crisis often depends on what is available. Because there is usually less than an hour between the decision to attempt suicide and the attempt, making means difficult to access can prevent suicide. [8]

Asking about lethal means is part of asking the question.

Work with a person at risk of suicide to remove access to lethal means, at least temporarily.



Firearms and Suicide

Ensuring that firearms are stored securely and handled appropriately is essential to preventing suicides. Suicides make up the majority of all gun-related deaths in the US. [11] Suicide attempts using firearms are also highly lethal, with 90% of firearm suicide attempts ending in death. [12] Research shows that there is a low rate of means substitutions among people who are suicidal, meaning that if the preferred means is removed, a person in crisis is less likely to attempt. [13] Since firearms are so lethal, it is critical that access to firearms is restricted for a person who is thinking about suicide.



Recent Legislation

Possessions and Permits for Handguns (HB0824)

Increases penalties for violating handgun wearing, carrying, and transport regulations. Requires annual report on information related to handgun permitting and possession violations. Mandates the addition of conflict resolution and de-escalation, anger management, and suicide prevention sections to the current firearm licensing curricula. In partnership with the Public Health Services Administration and the Department of State Police, the Office of Suicide Prevention is creating the curricula for all three additional sections.

Jaelynn's Law (SB0858)

Expands prohibitions relating to the storage of firearms and ammunition that can be accessed by minors. Requires a youth suicide prevention plan and firearm safe storage guide by January 1, 2024. The Governor's Commission on Suicide Prevention, in partnership with the Office of Suicide Prevention and the Public Health Services Administration, is currently developing the plan and the guide. Jaelynn's Law is named in honor of Jaelynn Willey, a 16-year-old Marylander killed in 2018 by a fellow student using a parent's unsecured firearm.

Learn more about these bills at the Maryland General Assembly website:
<https://mgaleg.maryland.gov/mgawebbsite>

Voluntary Safe Storage

One of the most important things that responsible firearm owners can do is to limit access. One unsecured firearm can put everyone in a household at risk of killing or injuring themselves or others, not just the firearm owner. Whatever securing devices are chosen, make sure to keep keys and combinations away from children, unauthorized users, and people at risk of harming themselves or others. Store firearms unloaded, locked, and separate from ammunition.

If someone in the home is feeling suicidal, has recently attempted suicide, or is experiencing a crisis, it is safest to remove lethal means from the household entirely until the situation improves. **In cases of crisis, consider storing firearms temporarily at an external voluntary safe storage option near you.**



For Safe Storage Near You

Visit the Maryland Safe Storage Map website.

<https://mdpgv.org/safestoragemap/>

Extreme Risk Protective Orders

An extreme risk protective order (ERPO) is a civil court-issued order that temporarily prohibits individuals who are found to be a danger to themselves or others from purchasing or possessing a firearm, rifle, or shotgun.

In Maryland, ERPOs can be filed by:

- **Family members**
- **Law enforcement**
- **Health care professionals including...**
 - Physician
 - Psychologist
 - Clinical Social Worker (LCSW)
 - Licensed Clinical Professional Counselor (LCPC)
 - Clinical Nurse (specializing in psychiatric/mental health nursing)
 - Psychiatric Nurse Practitioner
 - Licensed Clinical Marriage or Family Therapist (LMFT)
 - Health Officer
 - Designee of a Health Officer who has examined the individual



For more about ERPOs

Visit the Bloomberg American Health Initiative ERPO Website.

<https://americanhealth.jhu.edu/implementERPO>



TRAIN

Suicide prevention training raises awareness and builds skills that can help to save lives. There are training options available for anyone, whether you are just beginning to learn about suicide prevention, or you are an experienced mental health professional looking to add tools to your toolbox.

Building Essential Skills

The provision of suicide prevention training is a critical function of the Office of Suicide Prevention. It is essential that behavioral health professionals, community gatekeepers, and the general public are offered opportunities to learn and engage with suicide prevention. Suicide prevention training can be tailored to a wide variety of audiences – it can increase awareness and decrease stigma for the general public, or it can help build critical skills for clinicians.

Between July 1, 2022 and June 30, 2023, the Office of Suicide Prevention offered eleven trainings and trained 1,231 individuals. Of those trainings, seven provided continuing education units (CEUs) for counselors, psychologists, and social workers.

The Office is offering expanded training for the public during Suicide Prevention Awareness Month, including:

- **Mental Health First Aid**, *a skills-based training course that teaches participants about mental health and substance-use issues, including how to recognize a mental health challenge or crisis and how to connect to help.*
- **Trainings with the Trevor Project**
 - *Ally Training creates dialogue about being an adult ally for LGBTQ youth and informs about common terminology.*
 - *CARE Training (Connect, Adapt, Respond, Empower) provides an overview of suicide among LGBTQ youth.*

Through the Office's monthly newsletter, suicide prevention training throughout Maryland is shared with hundreds of advocates, clinicians, and community members.



Stay Up to Date with Training

Subscribe to the Office of Suicide Prevention email list for monthly updates.

<https://conta.cc/456FtiR>

Annual Suicide Prevention Conference

Every year, the Office of Suicide Prevention hosts Maryland's Annual Suicide Prevention Conference. Held on the first Wednesday of October, the conference serves as a culmination of Suicide Prevention Awareness Month. This year's conference will be hosted fully virtually over Zoom on October 4, 2023 and will be an opportunity for hundreds of Marylanders to learn about special topics in suicide prevention. 5.75 CEUs are available for psychologists, counselors, or social workers who attend the full conference (partial CEUs are not available).

Keynote Speaker

Dr. Richard Tedeschi is Executive Director of the Boulder Crest Institute for Posttraumatic Growth, in Bluemont, Virginia, where he has been one of the developers of programs based on posttraumatic growth principles to help combat veterans and first responders. He is also Professor Emeritus in the Department of Psychological Science at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte, where he served for 42 years.



He has published nine books and numerous professional articles on posttraumatic growth, an area of research that he developed while at UNC Charlotte.

In this presentation, Dr. Tedeschi will focus on how posttraumatic growth approaches to intervention can help reduce suicidal ideation and provide a hopeful perspective on the future for people who have trauma histories.



Register for the Conference

Visit the 35th Annual Suicide Prevention Conference Page to register today.
<https://rb.gy/ol8m7>



CONNECT

Suicide prevention is a community effort. In Maryland, there is a strong coalition of champions and organizations working to prevent suicide. For anyone who is interested in joining the growing community of suicide prevention advocates in Maryland, there are limitless opportunities.

A Coalition of Partners

There are many organizations engaging in suicide prevention. Here are a few key partners that frequently collaborate with the Office of Suicide Prevention.

Together We Care is a set of community-driven campaigns supported by the Office of Suicide Prevention. These campaigns spotlight and elevate suicide prevention and mental health promotion for historically underserved and excluded groups. Each campaign is undertaken in partnership with grassroots organizations that serve these communities.

Taking Care of Us

Strengthening Black and Brown Communities through Mental Health Equity and Advocacy

Key Partners

Black Mental Health Alliance develops, promotes, and sponsors culturally-relevant educational forums, trainings, and referral services that support the health and well-being of Black people and their communities.



Website: <https://blackmentalhealth.com/>

Office of Minority Health and Health Disparities addresses the social determinants of health and eliminate health disparities by leveraging the resources of the Maryland Department of Health, providing health equity consultation, guiding policy decisions, and influencing strategic direction on behalf of the Secretary of Health.

Website: <https://health.maryland.gov/mhhd/Pages/home.aspx>

Caring Out Loud

Empowering LGBTQ+ Youth and Young Adults through Mental Health Training, Advocacy, and Action

Key Partners

The Trevor Project works to end suicide among LGBTQ young people through provision of crisis services, training, research, and advocacy. The Trevor Project offers a toll-free telephone line where confidential assistance and crisis support is provided by trained counselors.



Website: <https://www.thetrevorproject.org/>

Caring for Communities

Supporting Native and Indigenous Communities through Mental Health Training, Equity, and Advocacy

Key Partners

Native American Lifelines promotes health and social resiliency within Urban American Indian communities. Native American LifeLines applies principles of trauma informed care to provide culturally centered behavioral health, dental, outreach and referral services.



Website: <https://nativeamericanlifelines.org/>

Governor's Commission on Suicide Prevention

The Governor's Commission was created in 2009 to strengthen and coordinate the state's suicide prevention, intervention, and postvention services. Governor's Commission meetings are open to the public, and are available to stream on the Office of Suicide Prevention's Facebook page.



For more about the Governor's Commission

Visit the Governor's Commission webpage.

<https://health.maryland.gov/bha/suicideprevention/Pages/governor's-commission-on-suicide-prevention.aspx>

988 and Crisis Services

What is 988?

988 is the National Suicide & Crisis Lifeline. You can call, text, or chat 988.

Contacting 988 connects people directly to the National Suicide & Crisis Lifeline, which encompasses all behavioral crisis services, to include all mental health and substance use (problems with drug and alcohol use).

The 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline replaces the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline AND expands services to cover all behavioral health crisis services.



The graphic features a dark blue background with light blue circular accents. On the right side, there are three overlapping images: a woman talking on a mobile phone, a man looking at a laptop, and a woman hugging a child. The text is white and light blue. The logo '988 SUICIDE & CRISIS LIFELINE' is in the top left. The main message 'You are not alone. Caring call specialists available 24/7.' is in the center. At the bottom left, it says 'Call or text 988'. At the bottom center, it says 'ALWAYS CONFIDENTIAL. ALWAYS AVAILABLE.' At the bottom right is the Maryland Department of Health logo.

The Lifeline provides live crisis center phone services in English and Spanish and provides translation services in over 150 additional languages for people who call 988.

Here are all of the ways to connect:

- Call 988, the Suicide & Crisis Lifeline
 - press 1 for the Veterans Crisis Line
 - press 2 for Spanish
 - press 3 for LGBTQ+ support
- Text 988 (English and Spanish)
- Chat online: [988Lifeline.org](https://988lifeline.org)



Learn more about 988 MD

Visit the 988 MD website.

<https://health.maryland.gov/bha/Pages/988md.aspx>

Suicide Prevention Non-Profits

American Foundation for Suicide Prevention

Maryland Chapter

The grassroots work AFSP does focuses on eliminating the loss of life from suicide by: delivering innovative prevention programs, educating the public about risk factors and warning signs, raising funds for suicide research and programs, and reaching out to those individuals who have lost someone to suicide. AFSP Maryland brings together people from all backgrounds who want to prevent suicide in the state. Families and friends who have lost someone to suicide, vulnerable individuals, mental health professionals, clergy, educators, students, community/business leaders, and many others energize the chapter.

Out of the Darkness Walks

Every year, AFSP coordinates fundraising walks around the country for suicide prevention. The core of the Out of the Darkness movement, which began in 2004, are these community walks. These events give people the courage to open up about their own connections to the cause, and a platform to create a culture that's smarter about mental health. Friends, family members, neighbors and coworkers walk side-by-side, supporting each other and in memory of those who have been lost to suicide.

Find a local Out of the Darkness Walk at the AFSP website:

<https://supporting.afsp.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=cms.page&id=1370>



Connect with AFSP

Visit the Maryland Chapter website.

<https://afsp.org/chapter/maryland>

Mental Health Association of Maryland

MHAMD is Maryland's only volunteer nonprofit citizens organization bringing together consumers, families, professionals, advocates, and concerned citizens for unified action in all aspects of behavioral health. MHAMD envisions a just, humane, and healthy society where each individual is accorded respect, dignity, and the opportunity to achieve their full potential—free from stigma and prejudice.

Mental Health Association of Maryland, cont.

MHAMD provides a wide array of programs and public awareness campaigns, including training and peer support services for older adults. MHAMD also champions advocacy efforts every legislative season.



Connect with MHAMD

Visit the Mental Health Association of Maryland website.
<https://www.mhamd.org/>

NAMI Maryland

The National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) Maryland Chapter provides educational resources and events, statewide outreach, advocacy and affiliate organizational support. NAMI Maryland provides the free trainings that allow NAMI affiliates to deliver NAMI programs.

Local NAMI affiliates in Maryland offer free peer support, education and outreach programs, and engage mental health advocates in their communities.

NAMI Maryland encompasses a strong statewide network of more than 43,000 families, individuals, community-based organizations and service providers. These members and supporters are the face and voice of the NAMI Maryland movement--families, individuals, friends and businesses--who come together to celebrate mental illness recovery, to honor those who have lost their lives to mental illness and to combat stigma, promote awareness and advocate for others.

NAMI Maryland provides public education workshops, teleconferences on specific issues, and carry out an ongoing campaign and public policy agenda to improve mental health services throughout the state, reduce the stigma associated with mental illness, and support effective treatment and recovery programs.



Connect with NAMI Maryland

Visit the Maryland Chapter website.
http://namimd.org/about_nami_maryland



SUSTAIN

In suicide prevention, there are no one-size-fits-all solutions or easy fixes. Effective suicide prevention requires consistent effort from a healthy community. To stay engaged over time without burning out, it is essential to care for yourself – especially if you have been personally impacted by suicide.

The Value of Self-Care

Self-care is intentional time taken to do things to improve your own mental and physical well-being. Due to the tragic nature of suicide, suicide prevention can be mentally and emotionally draining. Practicing self-care protects your health, and is extremely important for those who are participating in suicide prevention efforts.

Self-care looks different for everyone. If you don't have one already, consider developing an individualized self-care plan. Here are a few questions to ask yourself: [14]

What kinds of activities are self-care for me? Try to list a variety of activities, and make sure to include some that are simple and readily available for challenging days.

Who are the people I can talk to? Think about who you can connect with and trust, regardless of whether you're having a good day or a bad day.

Who are the people I can ask for help? Make a list of people and resources you can lean on if you are struggling. Your list should include 988 – you can always call for more information and resources.

There are hundreds of resources to help guide you with self-care and self-compassion. Although smartphone applications are a relatively new way to practice self-care, there are many choices available. The One Mind PsyberGuide is a free resource where apps and digital health resources are categorized and reviewed by experts.



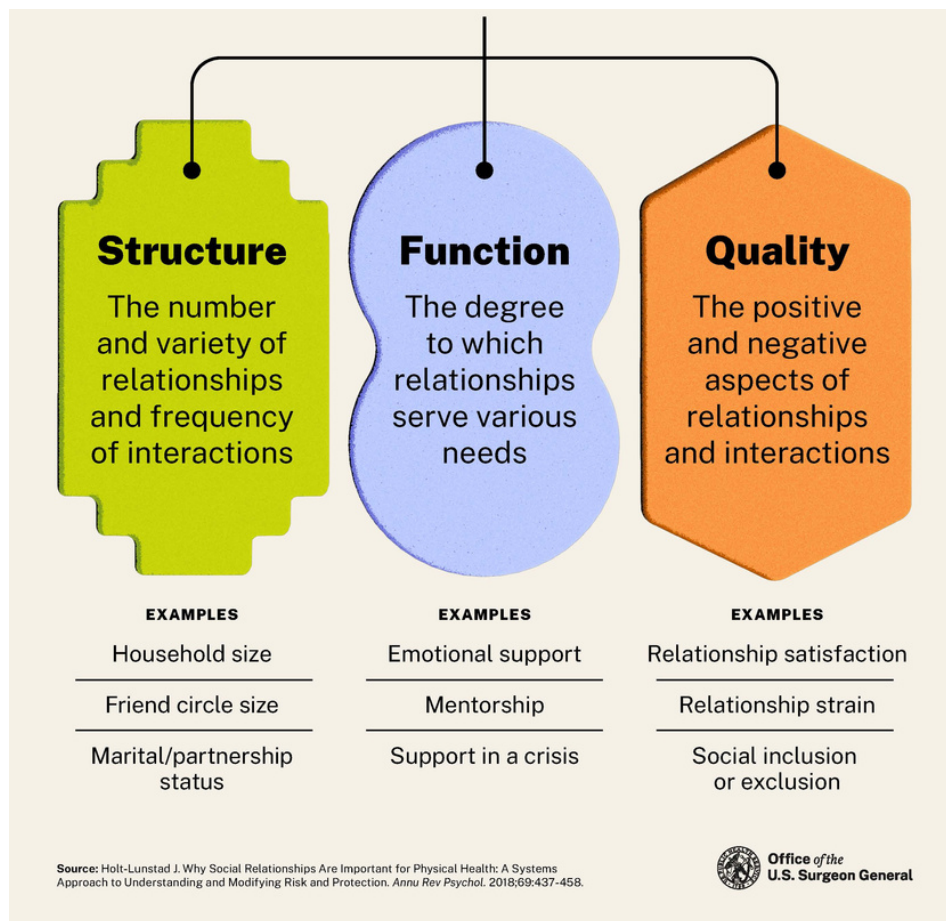
Find a Wellness App for You!

Visit the One Mind PsyberGuide website.
<https://onemindpsyberguide.org/>

Social Connection

Our relationships with loved ones and with our communities are essential to our overall wellbeing. With social isolation rising, it is more important than ever to prioritize social connection in our lives. Social connection has a tremendous positive impact on mental, emotional, and physical health.

In May 2023, the US Surgeon General Dr. Vivek Murthy released a Surgeon General’s Advisory focused on “Our Epidemic of Loneliness and Isolation.” Studies cited in the Surgeon General’s advisory showed that deaths by suicide, along with risk of self-harm, are associated with loneliness and indicators of isolation. [19] The advisory highlights the healing effects of social connection. This month, consider the **Three Vital Components of Social Connection**, and ways that you might improve or deepen your social connections:



Explore the Advisory

Visit the US Surgeon General’s Social Connection Priority Area Website.
<https://www.hhs.gov/surgeongeneral/priorities/connection/index.html>



Connecting to Hope

For many Marylanders, suicide is a tragedy that has touched their lives in painful, traumatic ways. Our communities are forever shaped by the hundreds of lives we lose to suicide every year.

Still, for those around us who are struggling with despair today, there is an opportunity to connect to hope. With the help of engaged and informed communities, we can prevent suicide.

This month, take time to check in with loved ones. Share information, learn more, and help fight against stigma by debunking myths about suicide. Join the community of suicide prevention advocates through events like the Maryland Annual Suicide Prevention Conference and AFSP Out of the Darkness Walks. Consider reaching out to organizations involved in suicide prevention in Maryland to learn more about available support. Save 988 on your phone, and spread the word about our National Suicide & Crisis Lifeline. Most importantly, engage in self-care and self-compassion, and know that you are never alone. You matter. There are always resources available to help you connect to hope.

The Office of Suicide Prevention encourages you to be the difference in your community, during Suicide Prevention Awareness Month and beyond. Thank you for learning about and supporting suicide prevention in Maryland!

If you would like to learn more, or if you have any questions, email us at mdh.suicideprevention@maryland.gov.

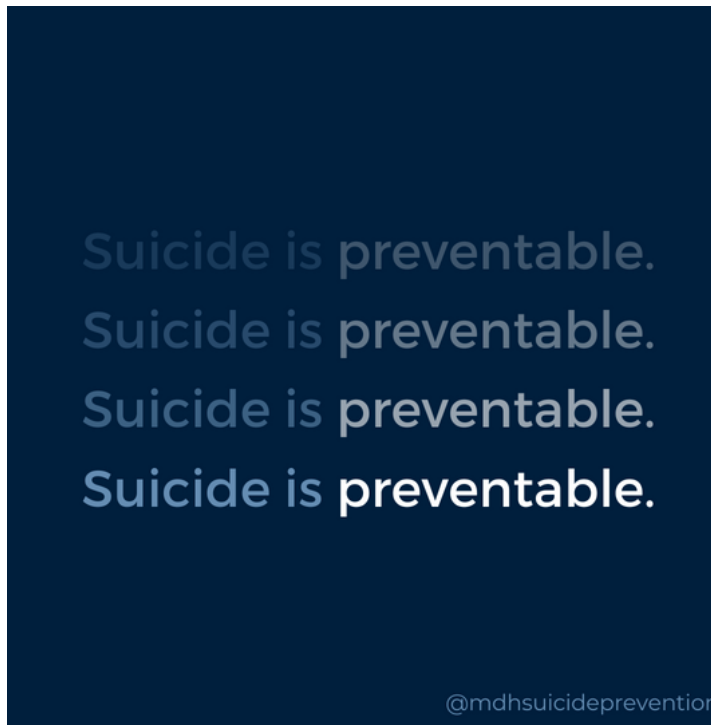


RESOURCES

For Suicide Prevention Awareness Month, the Office of Suicide Prevention has developed and compiled materials to supplement this toolkit. These resources include social media posts, selected factsheets, and references.

Social Media

Shareable social media, along with recommended captions, are below. Use the graphics and messages to encourage your community to Connect to Hope!



Suicide is preventable and there's always hope.

Call, text, or chat 988 for help if you or a loved one are experiencing suicidal thoughts.

#ConnectingToHope
#MASPC35
#Connect2Help



Asking someone if they're thinking about suicide does not increase the risk of suicide. It can open a conversation that can save a life.

If a loved one is showing warning signs and/or experiencing a mental health crisis, ask the question and connect to help.

#ConnectingToHope
#StartTheConversation

Social Media

Shareable social media, along with recommended captions, are below. Use the graphics and messages to encourage your community to Connect to Hope!

@mdhsuicideprevention

Be SMART with Firearms

- » Suicides make up the majority of gun-related deaths in the US
- » 90% of suicide attempts using firearms are lethal

Store firearms unloaded, locked & separate from ammunition.

Keep keys and combinations away from children & people at risk of crisis.

*Pew Research Center, 2023;
Conner A, et al. (Annals of Internal Medicine), 2019*

A key component to suicide prevention is lethal means safety.

Being SMART with firearms benefits the individual and those around them.

#ConnectingToHope
#SafeStorage

@mdhsuicideprevention

What is a Safety Plan?

A safety plan is a set of resources and instructions that can guide a person during a mental health or substance use crisis. Safety plans are NOT contracts. Instead, they are voluntary guidelines developed and driven by the person at risk of crisis.

Safety plans can be developed...
with a clinician
with a loved one
on your own!

A safety plan can be done individually or with a mental health professional

Download the Connecting To Hope Suicide Prevention Awareness Month Toolkit to learn more about Safety Planning.

#ConnectingToHope
#SafetyPlanning

Social Media

Shareable social media, along with recommended captions, are below. Use the graphics and messages to encourage your community to Connect to Hope!



Established in 2003, World Suicide Prevention Day was created by the International Association for Suicide Prevention and the World Health Organization (WHO) to share the message that suicide is preventable. Learn More about the history of World Suicide Prevention Day at <https://www.iasp.info/WSPD/about/>

#SuicidePreventionDay
#ConnectingtoHope
#WearYellow



If you are struggling, you are not alone.

Text, Call, or Chat 988 at anytime to speak to a trained mental health professional, have a supportive conversation, and connect to resources.

#ConnectingtoHope
#Connect2Help

Social Media

Shareable social media, along with recommended captions, are below. Use the graphics and messages to encourage your community to Connect to Hope!



Connect to Hope through
Social Connection

@mdhsuicideprevention

Connecting with others is essential for suicide prevention and our overall wellness.

Plan some time with a loved one this week!

#ConnectingToHope
#SocialConnection

@mdhsuicideprevention

You can't pour from
an empty cup.

**What are you
doing for
SELF-CARE?**



There's no way to pour into others if your own cup is empty. This Suicide Prevention Awareness Month, create a list of ways you can fill your cup. Go to <https://onemindpsyberguide.org/> for more self-care resources.

#ConnectingtoHope
#FillYourCup
#selfcare
#selfcompassion

Warning Signs for Suicide

Warning signs are observable indicators that a person may be thinking about suicide & may urgently need help.

SIGNS TO LOOKOUT FOR



Talking About

- Wanting to die or to kill oneself
- Looking for a way to kill oneself, such as searching online or obtaining a gun
- Feeling hopeless or having no reason to live
- Feeling trapped or in unbearable pain
- Being a burden to others

Behavior Change

- Increasing the use of alcohol or drugs
- Losing interest in activities
- Acting anxious or agitated; behaving recklessly and irrationally
- Sleeping too little or too much
- Withdrawing or feeling isolated
- Showing rage or talking about seeking revenge
- Displaying extreme mood swings
- Sharp drop in performance
- Giving away possessions

ASK DIRECTLY



If you think someone may be thinking of suicide. Asking the question "are you thinking of suicide?" can open the door to a conversation that may save a life.

HOW TO HELP: ABCDE



- A** Ask Directly
- B** Be an Active Listener
- C** Continue to Keep Them Safe
- D** Discuss Options and Connect to Help
- E** Encourage, Support, and Follow Up

GET HELP NOW



If someone is...

- Talking about wanting to die or to kill oneself
- Looking for a way to kill oneself, such as searching online or obtaining a gun
- Talking about feeling hopeless or having no reason to live

MENTAL HEALTH OR SUBSTANCE USE CRISIS?



CALL OR TEXT 988



CONFIDENTIAL AND AVAILABLE 24/7

Safe and Secure Storage for Firearm Owners

Storing your firearms safely and securely can save lives. By storing your firearms, you can prevent your weapons from being stolen. You can also prevent your weapons from being accessed by loved ones at risk of suicide or violence against others.

Be SMART | Safely Store Your Firearms



-  Store and lock firearms **unloaded**
-  Store and lock ammunition **separately from firearms**
-  Make sure **keys/combinations are not accessible** to people in household in crisis (at risk for violence against self or others)
-  If someone is in crisis in the household, **temporarily remove firearms** from your home
-  **Avoid storing firearms unattended in vehicles** to prevent theft

LOCKING DEVICES



1

Cable Lock (Free-\$50)

Device that blocks chamber to prevent firing. Typically requires key or combination to unlock, usable on most firearms. Good to prevent children from access, but can usually be cut with bolt cutters/simple devices.

2

Trigger Lock (\$5-\$50)

Two-piece lock, fits over trigger guard. Blocks trigger but does not prevent loading. Typically requires key or combination to unlock. Should not be used on loaded firearm (can still be fired). Not usable on lever-action firearms.

LOCKING BOXES



1

Lock Box (\$25-\$350)

Small safe to store handguns/small firearms. Typically requires key, combination, or fingerprint to unlock. Lock boxes can be permanently mounted to prevent theft.

2

Safe (\$100-\$2,500)

Stores variety of firearms/other valuables. Typically requires key, combination, or biometrics to unlock. Most secure option for multiple firearms, and for theft prevention.



The 9-8-8 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline

Marylanders can connect to a local behavioral health crisis call specialist through the 9-8-8 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline. People experiencing mental health or substance use crises can call or text 9-8-8, or chat online: 988Lifeline.org.

What does this mean for Marylanders?

When someone in Maryland calls 9-8-8, the call is routed based on the caller's area code. For those calls routed to Maryland, the call is answered by one of the strategically-located call centers. These centers provide phone-based support and information regarding local resources.

Who can call 9-8-8?

Anyone in need of assistance with behavioral health-related problems.

What can people expect when they call 9-8-8?

Callers will hear a greeting message while their call is routed to a Lifeline network crisis call center (based on the caller's area code)

- A trained crisis counselor will answer the phone, listen to the caller, understand how their problem is affecting them, provide support, and provide resources and interventions as needed.
- If a Maryland crisis center is unable to take the call, the caller will be automatically routed to a national backup crisis center.

- The Lifeline provides live crisis center phone services in English and Spanish and uses Language Line Solutions to provide translation services in over 150 additional languages for people who call 9-8-8
- Veterans can access the Veterans Crisis Line by calling 9-8-8 and pressing 1
- Press 2 for Spanish
- Press 3 for LGBTQ+ support (under 25 years old)

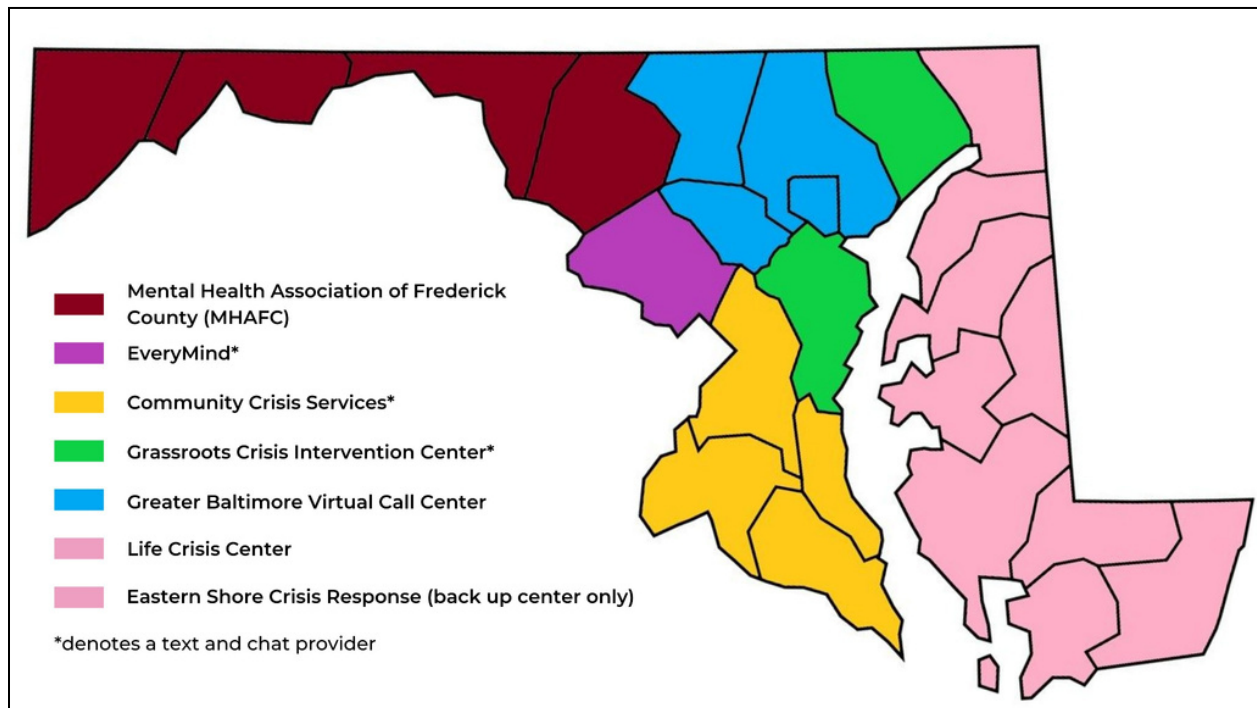
What can someone expect during a chat or text?

Texts and chats to 9-8-8 will also be routed to a Lifeline network crisis call center based on area code. A response to chats and texts will be given by a call center staff person.

Learn more:

988.maryland.gov

Maryland's 9-8-8 Call Centers



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