

# Panel develops plan for preventing youth suicide

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An independent panel convened by the National Institutes of Health (NIH) has developed a 10-year roadmap for advancing research to prevent youth suicide. The panel listed 29 recommendations that address three critical issues: improving data systems, enhancing data collection and analysis methods, and strengthening the research and practice community.

"The complexity of suicide prevention must be embraced in order to forge new research strategies," said Dr. Todd Little, workshop and panel chair and professor of educational psychology and leadership at Texas Tech University, Lubbock. "We must coordinate numerous surveillance systems, elevate the rigor and breadth of research methods, and build stronger collaborations among the larger policy, practice, and research communities."

To help close research gaps related to youth suicide and to assess the scientific evidence, NIH convened the Pathways to Prevention Workshop on March 29-30, 2016. The panel of independent experts attended the workshop and developed a report. The report includes recommendations to address these four critical issues over the next decade:

- The need for surveillance by linking data from multiple sources (e.g., state all-payer databases, emergency room data, electronic health records data).
- The need to improve measurement across diverse populations

and time scales of personal characteristics such as sexual orientation and identity, and environmental contexts that have been associated with [suicide risk](#).

- The need to help practitioners in identifying effective [suicide prevention](#) programs.
- The need for coordinated education and training opportunities for health care providers, schools, agencies, families, and communities to remove the stigma associated with suicide.

The panel cited several barriers that impede efforts to combat youth suicide. For example, there is limited availability of linked data systems to facilitate identifying important risk factors for youth suicide.

Researchers have not assessed measures of suicide risk and protective factors at multiple levels (including the individual, family, peer group, school, and community) over time. Additionally, the stigma associated with suicide has resulted in the misclassification and underreporting of suicide and [suicide attempts](#) and has reduced opportunities for successful intervention.

More than 42,000 Americans die from suicide each year. It's the 10th leading cause of death in the United States and the second leading cause of death in youth (10 to 24 years of age) and young adults (25 to 34 years of age), claiming the lives of 12,073 individuals in these age brackets in 2014, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Risk factors such as depression, other mental disorders, and substance use, along with precipitating events such as relationship loss or disruption; and environmental circumstances like barriers to accessing mental health treatment, can contribute to suicidal behavior.

"Although youth suicide is pervasive, it can be prevented," said Dr. Little. "Researchers, practitioners, and policymakers must unite to stop suicide and circumvent the devastating pain and suffering it causes. The recommendations in this roadmap can help reduce youth suicide and

guide us toward our ultimate goal of eliminating it."

The panel's final report, which identifies future research and clinical priorities, incorporates its assessment of the workshop's systematic review of the [scientific evidence](#), expert presentations, audience input, and public comments. This independent report is not a policy statement of the NIH or the federal government.

**More information:** The five-member panel included experts in the fields of clinical psychology, statistics, health education, prevention and community health research, methods research, and epidemiology. Panel member biographies, an archived NIH VideoCast (link to the P2P YSP workshop resources page where the VideoCast is listed) of the workshop, and additional resources are available at [prevention.nih.gov/programs-education/prevention/panel-members](https://prevention.nih.gov/programs-education/prevention/panel-members)

Provided by National Institutes of Health

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