

Suicide prevention program associated with reduction in suicide attempts

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Counties that implemented Garrett Lee Smith Memorial Suicide Prevention Program activities had lower rates of suicide attempts among young people ages 16 to 23 than counties that did not, according to an article published online by *JAMA Psychiatry*.

Suicide prevention is a major public health priority. Since 2005, the Garrett Lee Smith Memorial Suicide Prevention Program (the GSL program) has funded grants for [suicide prevention](#) activities awarded to states, tribal communities and college campuses in the United States. Programs supported by the GLS program have generally been comprehensive in scope and multifaceted, with activities that include education, mental health awareness, screening, and training events for gatekeepers to better recognize suicide risk, ask about risk, intervene and help suicidal individuals get assistance.

Christine Walrath, Ph.D., of ICF International, New York, and coauthors conducted a study of community-based suicide prevention programs for [young people](#) across 46 states and 12 tribal communities. The study compared 466 counties implementing the GLS program between 2006 and 2009 (the intervention counties) with 1,161 counties not exposed to the GLS program (the control group counties). The analysis used 57,000 respondents in the intervention and 84,000 in the control group. Suicide attempt rates for each county were obtained from the National Survey on Drug Use and Health.

The authors report counties implementing GLS program activities had

lower suicide attempt rates the year after implementation among young people ages 16 to 23, which the authors estimate resulted in 4.9 fewer suicide attempts per 1,000 youths.

"Although causality cannot be definitely inferred from our study owing to a lack of random assignment, these results suggest that more than 79,000 attempts were avoided between 2008 and 2011 following implementation of the GLS program. ... These findings have significant implications for public health policy - specifically, suicide prevention programs and the ways to reduce morbidity and mortality associated with suicidal behaviors - and suggest that community-based programs (such as the GLS [program](#)) provide a pathway toward fewer [suicide attempts](#) and deaths," the study concludes.

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