



Local Facts about Suicide

Suicide is a preventable public health issue across the country, Alaska, and in our community. For our 2015 Needs Assessment (under Resources at www.fairbankswellness.org), the Fairbanks Wellness Coalition collected a significant amount of data related to suicide as well as substance abuse and mental health. We collected Fairbanks North Star Borough (FNSB) specific data as much as possible and we continue to collect updated information as it becomes available. Resources exist across our community and we can build upon them to prevent suicide. It will take all of us to listen, connect and help.

- In 2015, there were less FNSB suicides overall and in the 15-24 age group compared to 2014. We are hopeful that through continued community-wide prevention efforts, the number of suicides will continue to decrease and more residents will live a life of wellness.
- We are all in this together. Most everyone is affected by suicide and everyone, no matter their skin color, is susceptible. In FNSB, from 2005-2014, the number of suicides by race was equivalent to the population distribution. According to a June 2015 survey, more than two-thirds of FNSB residents knew someone who had taken his or her own life and 1 in 5 knew someone in the last year. Every person, no matter who they are, can help prevent suicide.
- Just like CPR, learning QPR (Question, Persuade, and Refer) can save a person's life. Although it is often thought that most suicides take place during the winter months, the highest number of Fairbanks North Star Borough suicides from 2005-2014 took place in the month of April. The second most common month was July. Being aware of changes in behavior in those we care about is important to identifying risk. Email us at info@fairbankswellness.org to find out more about QPR classes.
- According to Linda Chamberlain, Director of the Alaska Family Violence Prevention Project, nearly two-thirds of suicide attempts among adults were attributed to Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and 80% of suicide attempts during childhood/adolescence were attributed to ACEs. There are many resources in our community that protect our children from adverse childhood experiences by providing positive childhood experiences. Can you name a person during your childhood who provided a positive childhood experience? Can you name at least one specific organization which provides positive childhood experiences?
- In the Fairbanks North Star Borough, from 2005 to 2014 there were an equal number of suicides in age groups 15-24 and 25-34. The Fairbanks Wellness Coalition chose to focus on preventing suicide among the 15-24 age group with the hope that we can positively influence a younger generation long into the future. Connecting to our teens and young adults by reaching out and listening whether we are families, mentors, friends or even strangers is important in preventing suicide.
- Easy access to lethal means is a risk factor for suicide and the most common method used to complete suicide in FNSB is firearms. Locking up your firearms at home would be a way to protect your loved ones.
- Screening by medical providers is an effective preventative measure. The Alaska Suicide Follow-Back Study showed that 64% of decedents had seen their physician within 6 months of dying of suicide, indicative that screening by medical providers is an effective preventative measure. There are already medical providers here who screen for suicide and major risk factors. One of our strategies is to increase those in the medical community who effectively screen for suicide.
- According to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), alcohol and drug abuse are second only to depression and other mood disorders as the most frequent risk factors for suicide. There are resources here that can help improve mental/behavioral health. Can you name at least one agency?