

Napa Valley **Register**

September is Suicide Prevention and Awareness Month

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Denise Bleuel

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I am writing on behalf of the Suicide Prevention Council of Napa County to make you aware that September is Suicide Prevention and Awareness Month.

Suicide is not always preventable and sometimes comes “out of the blue.” Other times there are signs that you can learn with proper training, which we as a council provide for free to anyone in the community (and to other communities as well). Not only will you feel confident with new skills to help someone in crisis, but it will help you feel that you have done everything possible to prevent the suicide especially if, tragically, it is completed.

In December 2015, my precious son took his life. My husband and I joined as founding members of the Council in 2017 when it was formed. Our council has members representing Napa County Health and Human Services Agency, Aldea, Mentis, Napa Police, VOICES, Providence Queen of the Valley Community Outreach, OLE Health, NEWS, Napa County Office of Education, NAMI, Napa City Council, the Mental Health Board, and other organizations and community members.

We currently meet by Zoom but will hopefully resume meeting in person at Napa County Mental Health. The group is highly skilled, committed, cohesive and, believe it or not, we have celebrations and even laugh. We share the same goals towards reducing suicides by education, reducing stigma towards mental health, and providing resources.

We have created trainings to educate the community, collected data, have run marketing campaigns, developed resources for survivors of suicide loss, and are developing a comprehensive strategic plan. I will outline our programs after I give you as current as possible data of suicides for 2020:

Nationally there were 48,344; in California there were 4,491; and in Napa County there were 22.

Our first endeavor was to develop posters and flyers about suicide prevention, and important phone numbers to call while in crisis. We also created business cards with similar information that we pass out to the public. We educate the public by offering two trainings, one being a one-half hour introduction about suicide and the work of our council. The second is a comprehensive and evidence-based training called "QPR," (Question, Persuade and Refer), which follows the model of CPR. It empowers people to be able to respond to a potential suicidal person with a skill set, and includes a very helpful booklet. We have several trainers and have trained all of the organizations on our council, and also business organizations, churches and schools.

We are also committed to advocating for and providing resources to survivors of suicide loss. This includes a folded resource card distributed throughout the community in English, Spanish and Tagalog. In conjunction with The American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, we will be coordinating a Conference for Survivors of Suicide Loss at Providence Queen of the Valley Hospital on Nov. 20 from 8:30 a.m. to Noon, in English and Spanish. Registration can be made online on the AFSP website or at the conference.

AFSP has many resources online, including a very special service for which I am a volunteer called "Healing Conversations," where a peer volunteer of suicide loss speaks with another survivor of suicide loss. Collabria Care provides a support group and at times a class for loss survivors.

Often people say "I don't know what to say to a survivor?" A very simple response is to say "I am sorry for your loss." If you want to go a step further, you can ask "What was your loved one was like?" Believe me, they will always remember that.

We invite you to join our Council by calling Sarah O'Malley, Napa County Mental Health Director, at (707) 299-2102.

For QPR training, call Michele Farhat, Aldea, (707) 255-1855.

If you are suicidal or know someone who is, you can call Napa County Crisis, (707) 253-4711. You can also Text "Home" to 741741 or call the National Suicide Prevention Hotline at (800) 273-8255, (English) or (888) 628-9454 (Spanish).

For support for Survivors, Collabria Care, (707) 258-9080. American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, afsp.org and follow steps to "Get Help." For parents who have lost children, The Compassionate Friends: (707) 258-1623. Peer support for survivors: Denise Bleuel, (707) 226-9838, Jim Warnock, (707) 332-7516.

As a council, we hope that you will join us in advocating for the prevention of suicide and, educating ourselves as the best we can. Thank you.

Denise Bleuel

Suicide Prevention Council of Napa County