



By **Susann Mikkelson**
*Cooperative
 Extension Agent*
 Guadalupe County, NM

If a friend or a member of our family breaks their arm, we ask them what happened; maybe sign their cast, and joke with them about it. If someone we love comes down with a virus – whether something simple like a cold, or more serious – we encourage them to seek medical attention and ask how we can help. But if someone we know is struggling with a mental health concern, we hesitate . . . afraid to bring it up at all, much less offer any advice or assistance.

Why? Many times, it is because we do not know what to say or how to help. Plus, no one wants to “accuse” someone of “being crazy.”

Mental health and well-being are no different than physical health and well-being. Any one of us is subject to experiencing some form of mental health issue at some time in our life; and in most cases, afflictions are treatable and likely can be overcome with proper medical attention. And, like physical health concerns, left untreated, mental health conditions can become critical and life-threatening.

It is time we start the conversation about mental health and suicide, erase the stigma, and begin to help each other. *Together, we can increase mental health and wellness, and prevent suicide.*

September is National **Suicide Prevention** Awareness Month

New Mexico reported 533 deaths by suicide in 2021, giving us the 4th highest rate of suicide in the United States. We know that this number is probably low; it is likely there were more suicides that went unreported as such, for various reasons.

Rural residents coping with mental health concerns face important barriers to treatment and relief. Among those barriers is the lack of access – or perceived lack of access – to treatment, the cost of treatment, and the sociocultural factors that increase the stigma around mental illness and what it means to seek help. This includes a culture of embarrassment – being afraid to be seen visiting the facility of a mental health provider; a culture of stoicism – being too proud or “tough” to seek treatment, which is often particularly an issue for males, and a culture of humility – being taught to not talk publicly about your problems.

IMPORTANT RESOURCES

NM Crisis Access Line 1-855-NMCRISIS (662-7474)

If you or a loved one is experiencing any kind of emotional crisis, mental health, or substance use concern, you can find help 24 hours a day, seven days a week, by calling the New Mexico Crisis and Access Line or Peer-to-Peer Warmline.

nmcrisisline.com

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline 1-800-273-TALK (8255)

The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline is a 24-hour, toll-free, confidential suicide prevention hotline available to anyone in suicidal crisis or emotional distress. Your call is routed to the nearest crisis center in our national network of more than 150 crisis centers. The lifeline's national network of local crisis centers provides crisis counseling and mental health referrals day and night.

Guadalupe County Health Council 575-472-4567 or

<https://sharenm.org/guadalupe-county-health-council/guadalupe-county-health-council>

• Here To Help NM:
<https://www.nmflb.org/Get-Involved/Here-To-Help-NM>

• AgWell:
<https://rmfu.org/home/special-projects/>
 or <https://agwell.org/>

• CHES Health Connections App:
<https://ches.health/erecovery/connection-s-app/>

• 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline:
<https://988lifeline.org/>

• 988 suicide & Crisis Lifeline Chat & Text:
<https://988lifeline.org/chat/>

• NAMI-New Mexico:
<https://naminewmexico.org/resources/>

• Blissful Minds New Mexico:
https://blissfulnm.com/hello-psyiatric-care-for-mental-health/?gad=1&gclid=EAlaQobChMly7uk2ImzgQMvJkp_AB20yAMBEAAYAAEgKzwpD_BwE

• List of Therapists in New Mexico who accept Medicaid:
<https://zencare.co/us/new-mexico/therapists/insurance/medicaid>

SOURCES FOR THIS ARTICLE

QPR Institute - <https://qprinstitute.com/>
 CDC Suicide in Rural America – <https://www.cdc.gov/ruralhealth/suicide.html>
<https://www.cdc.gov/suicide/facts/>
 Share New Mexico – <https://sharenm.org/>

Susann Mikkelson is a certified QPR trainer. If you, your group, organization or business would like to offer QPR Training, please contact the NMSU Guadalupe County Extension Office at 575-462-3652 or guadalupe@nmsu.edu.

Suicide Among New Mexico Residents in 2021¹



New Mexico

- **533** suicide deaths or about **10 per week** on average
- **4th highest rate** of suicide among all U.S. states
- New Mexico's suicide rate was **77% higher** than the U.S. rate

Leading Cause of Death

- **9th** leading cause of death
- **2nd** leading cause of death for those ages 12-18
- **6th** leading cause of death for men

Highest Suicide Rates

- **American Indians/Alaska Natives** ages **25-34**
- **Whites** ages **45-54**

Gender

- There were more than **4 male** suicide deaths for each **1 female** death
- Most **male** suicide deaths involved a **firearm** (60%)



Suicide Mechanism

- **57% Firearm**
- **26%** Hanging or Suffocation
- **11%** Overdose or Poisoning
- **6%** Other Causes



Suicide Trends from 2012 to 2021¹

- The suicide rate increased 17%
- The suicide rate with a firearm increased 28%
- The suicide rate of Hispanic or Latino persons increased 28%

Youth Suicide Attempts in 2021²

- 10% of high school students attempted suicide*
- 23% of lesbian, gay, or bisexual high school students attempted suicide

Suicide has far and deep-reaching impacts.

A study from the University of Kentucky found that, in addition to the direct loss of a life, suicide has the following additional impacts:

- An average of 135 people are exposed to a single death by suicide – this is the number of lives touched by one death.
- 53 people will have a short disruption in life as a result of that one death – this may be co-workers or classmates, friends and acquaintances, emergency responders who responded to the crisis, and of course, family.
- 25 people will have a major life disruption – this is the number of people whose lives will be changed for the long-term from one death by suicide.
- On average, one suicide death will have devastating effects on 11 people – permanently altering their lives and often leading to more mental health concerns.

Evidence-based research tells us that talking about suicide and mental health is one of the best ways to encourage treatment and prevent suicide. The more we learn, the more we share our caring compassion with others, the more we can avert suicide attempts that can alter the person's life for a period of time or permanently, and the more we can prevent the tragedy of suicide.

Thanks to highly increased public awareness and resulting policy change, there are now many more options for anyone seeking assistance with a mental health crisis or concern, even those of us living in rural communities. These options are accessible from remote locations, and many are completely anonymous, if that is an important factor for anyone seeking assistance.

Some of these services include programs that help us learn more about how we, as average citizens, can be a part of the solution to this major health concern in our communities. Consult with the Guadalupe County Health Council for more information on local resources, or reach out online to some of the many services listed in this article for help. You do not have to be in crisis to reach out to these services – you could reach out to learn more about how you can help someone else, reach out on their behalf and help connect them, or just get further information in general.

QPR (Question, Persuade, and Refer) Gatekeeper Training is one training program for **anyone and everyone** that provides a basic understanding of and training on how each of us, as common citizens, can help be a part of mental health treatment and suicide prevention. QPR is to suicide prevention what CPR is to life-saving intervention for someone experiencing a heart attack or similar event. QPR will help each of us, as family members, friends, colleagues, teachers and care providers, or even just strangers passing on the street become “gatekeepers” and teach us how to help be the bridge between a person in crisis and the professional help they need to come out of that crisis in a healthy, thriving way.

Let's start the conversation. Let's help keep each other safe, healthy and happy – physically and mentally.

This monthly ad is meant to inform the citizens of Guadalupe County of pertinent activities and useful information. This ad is made possible through the support of Singleton Ranches; content is developed by NMSU Guadalupe County Cooperative Extension Service. Anyone interested in providing input is welcome to contact the Extension Office at 575-472-3652 or email guadalupe@nmsu.edu.



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