



Indian Country Suicide Prevention: A Critical Investment for Our Communities

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Indian Country Suicide Prevention Needs an Investment

Suicide prevention programs can be a critical component to lowering rates of suicide and improving health outcomes. Given the high rate of suicide in Montana, the legislature should prioritize investments in suicide prevention programs, particularly those focused on American Indians, American Indian youth, and veterans.

Suicide in Montana

For almost forty years, Montana has had one of the highest suicide rates in the country. In 2014, the state ranked first in the nation.¹ Nationally, whites have the highest rate of suicide, followed by American Indians.² In Montana, this trend is reversed. Between 2014-2015, the American Indian suicide rate was 35.5 (per 100,000 people) compared to 28.1 for whites.³ Further, Montana youth ages 11 to 17 are more than twice as likely to commit suicide than youth nationally. Astonishingly, American Indian youth in Montana are almost four times more likely to die by suicide than their white counterparts.⁴ Additionally, between January 1, 2014 and March 1, 2016, 19 percent of American Indian suicides were committed by veterans.⁵

Table 1 below provides a comparative breakdown of additional suicide statistics in Montana for the years 2005-2014. This data indicates that a focused investment in suicide prevention in Montana and Indian Country is needed in order to address this prolonged public health issue.

Table 1. Montana Suicide Rates (by race, gender, and age, per 100,000 people)^{6,7}

	Race	Male (all ages)	Female (all ages)	Male Youth (age 11-17)	Female Youth (age 11-17)
American Indian	28.2	43.3	14.2	23.5	29.0
White	21.1	33.9	8.6	9.6	4.2

Youth suicidal risk assessments for 2015 also show that urban-residing American Indian youth consistently outscored reservation-residing American Indian youth in risk behaviors such as seriously considering, planning, and attempting suicide.⁸

Investing in Suicide Prevention is Necessary

Suicide continues to be a major public health issue for Montana. Investing in suicide prevention should be among the state's top priorities, with a specific focus on American Indians, American Indian youth, and veterans in particular.

¹ Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services, "Montana 2016 Suicide Mortality Review Team Report." <http://www.sprc.org/sites/default/files/resource-program/2016%20Montana%20Suicide%20Mortality%20Review%20Report.pdf>.

² Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services, "Montana 2016 Suicide Mortality Review Team Report."
<http://www.sprc.org/sites/default/files/resource-program/2016%20Montana%20Suicide%20Mortality%20Review%20Report.pdf>.

³ Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services, "Montana 2016 Suicide Mortality Review Team Report."
<http://www.sprc.org/sites/default/files/resource-program/2016%20Montana%20Suicide%20Mortality%20Review%20Report.pdf>.

⁴ Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services, "Montana 2016 Suicide Mortality Review Team Report."
<http://www.sprc.org/sites/default/files/resource-program/2016%20Montana%20Suicide%20Mortality%20Review%20Report.pdf>.

⁵ Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services, "Montana 2016 Suicide Mortality Review Team Report."
<http://www.sprc.org/sites/default/files/resource-program/2016%20Montana%20Suicide%20Mortality%20Review%20Report.pdf>.

⁶ Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services, "Montana 2016 Suicide Mortality Review Team Report."
<http://www.sprc.org/sites/default/files/resource-program/2016%20Montana%20Suicide%20Mortality%20Review%20Report.pdf>.

⁷ Center for Disease Control's WISQARS, "2005-2014, Montana, Suicide Injury deaths and Rates per 100,000, All Races, Both Sexes, All ages, ICD-10 Codes: X60-X84, Y87.0, *U03." <https://webappa.cdc.gov/cgi-bin/broker.exe>.

⁸ Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services, "Montana 2016 Suicide Mortality Review Team Report."
<http://www.sprc.org/sites/default/files/resource-program/2016%20Montana%20Suicide%20Mortality%20Review%20Report.pdf>.