**Workplace Mental Health and Suicide Prevention**

Suicide is a leading cause of death among working age adults in the United States. It deeply impacts workers, families, and communities. There were approximately 1.2 million suicide attempts in America in 2020. Tragically, more than 45,000 of these attempts were fatal.[[1]](#footnote-1) The construction industry has one of the highest rates of suicides among all occupations - four times higher than in the general population. September is Suicide Prevention Month and is an opportunity to raise awareness and provide support in protecting the mental health of America’s workers.

According to the National Institute of Mental Health, nearly 1 in 5 adults are living with a mental health condition, such as anxiety, depression, or post-traumatic stress[[2]](#footnote-2). In June 2020, the Center for Disease Control found that 40% of U.S. adults were struggling with mental health or substance abuse and 11% seriously considered suicide[[3]](#footnote-3). Work-related stress can have an impact on mental health and, without proper support, could lead to substance abuse and even suicide. Workers in the construction industry are generally at a higher risk for suicide due to work-related stress factors including seasonal/temporary employment, demanding work schedules, and serious injuries, which are sometimes treated with opioids. Not addressing the underlying stressors or injuries can exacerbate mental health symptoms and may increase the risk of substance abuse or even suicide.

By demonstrating their commitment to a safe and healthy workplace, employers can play an important role in reducing stigma and promoting mental health. In return, they may experience benefits such as improved workplace safety, higher morale, increased productivity, reduced turnover, and decreased operating costs.

During Suicide Prevention Month:

Participate in Construction Suicide Prevention Week, see <https://constructionsuicideprevention.com/> for tools, resources, and information about how to plan your own activities and register your participation.

Learn how to develop mental health and safety programs to help workers get the resources they need, which are available at [https://osha.gov/preventingsuicides](https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fosha.gov%2Fpreventingsuicides&data=05%7C01%7CMatarazzo.William%40dol.gov%7Cc6afca7b700f46c60a1008da816c1a79%7C75a6305472044e0c9126adab971d4aca%7C0%7C0%7C637964598547205530%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=GYV%2FapJm9Gijht5wMEO3NYQdsbK4H9TNJypM5Leaj%2FM%3D&reserved=0).

For example:

* Strive to create a workplace environment that fosters open communication and a sense of belonging.
* Implement a workplace safety and health program that proactively identifies and addresses hazards that could lead to injuries or illnesses.
* Provide resources and programs that promote employee health and well-being and support work-life balance.
* Inform employees of resources and treatment services available for mental health and substance use disorders through employee assistance or health insurance programs, or in the community.
* Provide accommodations and return-to-work assistance for employees seeking treatment or in recovery.

Use and share resources from OSHA and the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), such as:

* OSHA. Poster: Suicide Prevention: 5 Things You Should Know. OSHA Publication [4180](https://www.osha.gov/sites/default/files/publications/OSHA4180.pdf) (English) and [4181](https://www.osha.gov/sites/default/files/publications/OSHA4181.pdf) (Spanish).OSHA. [Recommended Practices for Safety and Health Programs](https://www.osha.gov/safety-management).
* OSHA. Safety and Health Topics:
  + [Preventing Suicides](http://www.osha.gov/preventingsuicides)
  + [Long Work Hours, Extended or Irregular Shifts, and Worker Fatigue](https://www.osha.gov/worker-fatigue)
* NIOSH. Workplace Safety & Health Topics:
  + [Opioids in the Workplace](https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/opioids/)
  + [Workplace Supported Recovery Program](https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/opioids/wsrp/default.html)

When you work closely with someone, you may sense when something is wrong. If you are concerned about a coworker, talk with them privately, and listen without judgment. Encourage them to get help. If someone is in crisis, stay with them and get help. If you believe a coworker is at immediate risk of suicide, stay with them until you can get further help. Contact emergency services or call 988 for the [Suicide and Crisis Lifeline](https://988lifeline.org/).

Together, we can stop the stigma and address mental health of American workers!

1. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Web-based Injury Statistics Query and Reporting System (WISQARS) Fatal Injury Reports. (2020, February 20). Retrieved February 9, 2021. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. The [2020 National Survey on Drug Use and Health](https://www.samhsa.gov/data/release/2020-national-survey-drug-use-and-health-nsduh-releases) (NSDUH) by the [Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration](http://www.samhsa.gov/) (SAMHSA) [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Czeisler MÉ , Lane RI, Petrosky E, et al. Mental Health, Substance Use, and Suicidal Ideation During the COVID-19 Pandemic — United States, June 24–30, 2020. MMWR Morb Mortal Wkly Rep 2020;69:1049–1057. DOI: [http://dx.doi.org/10.15585/mmwr.mm6932a1external icon](http://dx.doi.org/10.15585/mmwr.mm6932a1). [↑](#footnote-ref-3)