



ACCESS TO MENTAL HEALTH CARE IN RURAL AMERICA:

A CRISIS IN THE MAKING FOR SENIORS AND PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

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AMERICAN MENTAL HEALTH COUNSELORS
ASSOCIATION (AMHCA)

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The only organization working exclusively for the clinical mental health counseling profession.

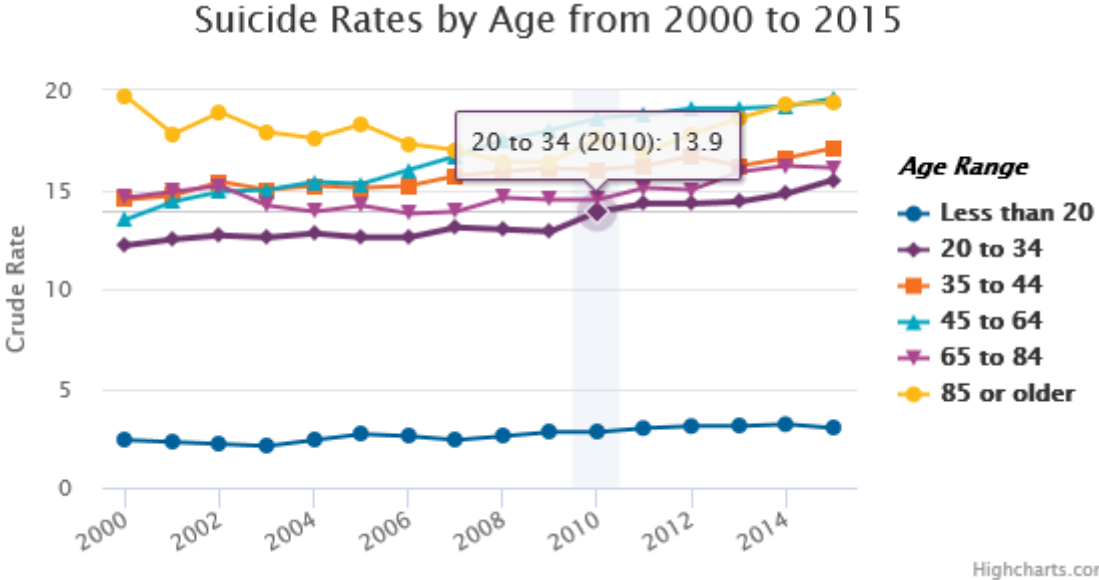
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A POTENTIALLY DIRE CONSEQUENCE OF UNTREATED DEPRESSION IN OLDER ADULTS IS SUICIDE

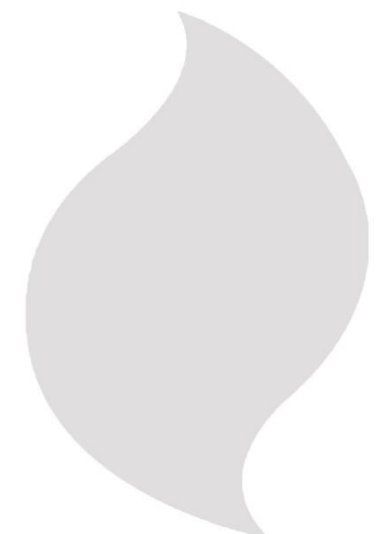
- Adults over age 65 have a disproportionately higher rate of suicide than other age groups (2015 data).
- The elderly (ages 65 and older) made up 14% of the population; they accounted for 17% of all suicides in the US.
- The rate of suicides for the elderly for 2014 was 15.4 per 100,000. There was about one elderly suicide every 80 minutes.
- There were about 19 suicides each day resulting in 6,648 suicides in among those 65 and older.
- Over 75 percent of older adults who die by suicide have seen their physicians in the month before their death.

In 2015, the highest suicide rate (19.6) was among adults between 45-64 years of age. *The second highest rate (19.4) occurred in those 85 years or older.*



States With The Highest Suicide Rates In US

Rank	US state	Number of Deaths By Suicide/100,000 Of The Population.
1	Alaska	21.8
2	Montana	20.5
3	New Mexico	20.4
4	Wyoming	19.3
5	Nevada	18.4
6	Colorado	16.7
7	West Virginia	16.6
8	Arizona	16
9	Oregon	15.9
10	Kentucky	15.3
11	Idaho	14.9
12	North Dakota	14.9
13	Oklahoma	14.7
14	Maine	14.5
15	Utah	14.3
16	Vermont	14.3
17	Arkansas	14.2
18	Florida	14.2
19	Kansas	13.8
20	Missouri	13.7
21	Tennessee	13.7



Risk Factors for Suicide

- Depression is a major risk factor for suicide.
- Yet depression is frequently missed by physicians because older adults are more likely to seek treatment for other physical ailments than they are to seek treatment for depression (NAMI).
- Tragically, many of these suicides may have been prevented, as many older adults who die by suicide reached out for help; 20 percent see a doctor the day they die, 40 percent the week they die, and 70 percent the month they die.

Risk Factors for Suicide

- For some older adults, the development of a disabling illness, loss of a spouse or loved one, retirement, moving out of the family home or other stressful event may bring about the onset of a depressive episode (NAMI).
- Symptoms of depression and anxiety in older Americans are often overlooked and untreated because they can coincide with other late life problems.



Workforce Issues

- Negative perceptions about working with older adults, and especially older adults with mental illness, accounts for some of the workforce deficiencies.
- Other barriers exist, some of which are financial. After residency most psychiatrists begin full-time clinical practice, forgoing geriatric specialization and an academic career, at least partly because of insufficient funding for fellowships.



Mental Health Counselors Are Armed and Ready to Address the Needs of Seniors with MH Conditions

- Mental health counselors are well qualified to provide covered MH benefits.
- Mental health counselors must obtain a master's or doctoral degree in counseling, two years postgraduate supervised experience, and pass a national exam to obtain a license to practice independently.
- All 50 states license mental health counselors to diagnose and treat mental health and emotional disorders.
- **Many federal programs already recognize mental health counselors including: The National Health Service Corps, Department of Veterans Affairs, U.S. Army and TRICARE.**

Thank You and Questions

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