



Our Path of Resilience

An Action Plan to Promote Life and Prevent Suicide in Newfoundland and Labrador



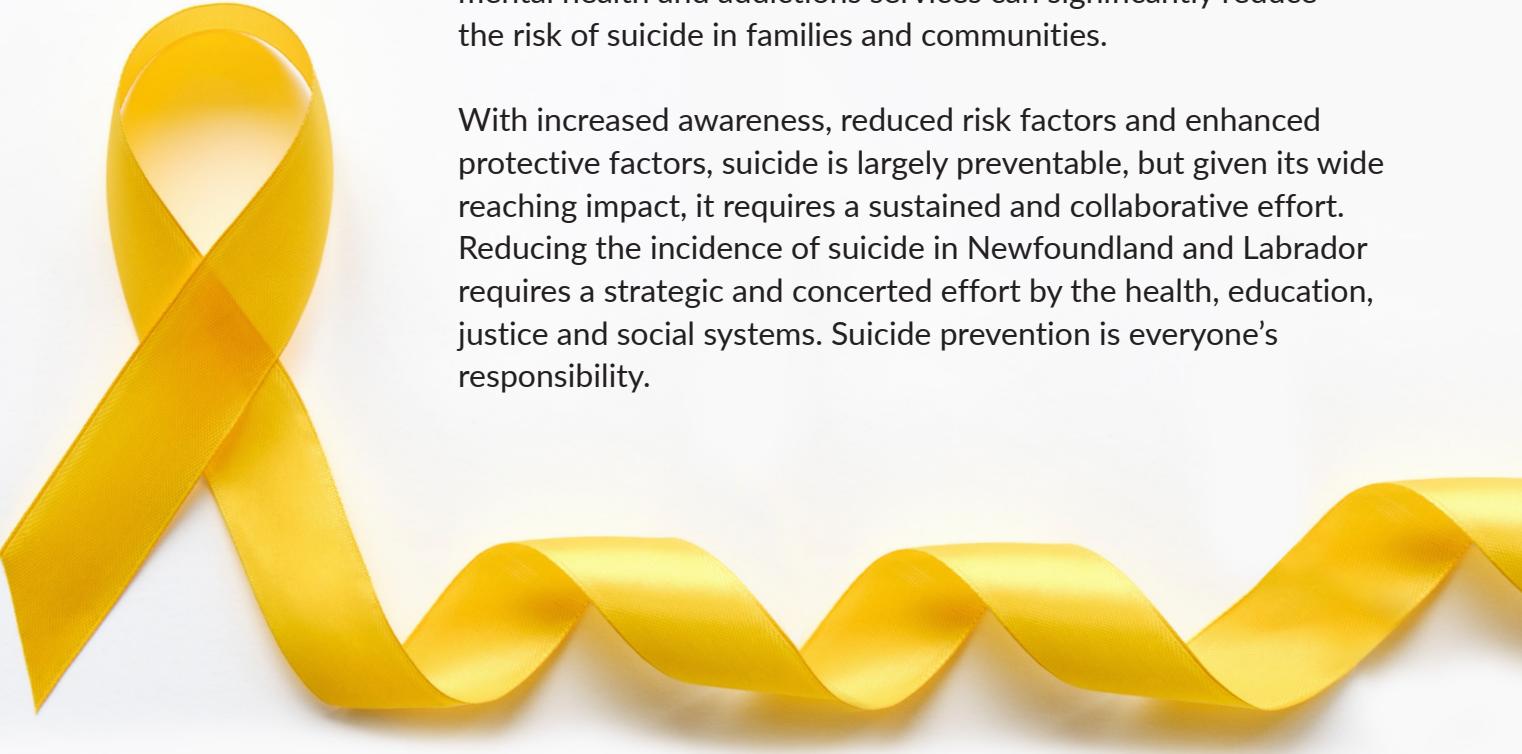
*You are
not
alone*

Suicide is a complex public health issue affecting people of all ages, regardless of socioeconomic status, ethnicity, or race. The impact is astounding. Globally, suicide is the ninth leading cause of death. Nationally, it is the leading cause of death in First Nations and Inuit communities, and the second leading cause of death among youth. Locally, the provincial suicide rate in Newfoundland and Labrador is higher than the national rate (15.4 versus 11.4 suicide deaths per 100,000 people).

Social determinants of health, such as income, education status, and physical and social environments, significantly influence a person's health and well-being. People who experience inequities, such as poverty, homelessness, systemic racism, ageism, gender-based discrimination, transphobia or homophobia, newcomers to Canada and persons with disabilities face barriers to accessing mental health and addictions programs and other health services they need to be well. To counter the challenges faced by some populations, an equity-based approach to provide equal access to programs and services is required.

Effective suicide prevention strategies are not only grounded in evidence, but based on a solid understanding of the role genetics, intergenerational and personal experiences, and social and cultural environments play in fostering resilience in individuals, families and communities. Protective factors, such as strong social connectedness, feelings of purpose, and access to appropriate mental health and addictions services can significantly reduce the risk of suicide in families and communities.

With increased awareness, reduced risk factors and enhanced protective factors, suicide is largely preventable, but given its wide reaching impact, it requires a sustained and collaborative effort. Reducing the incidence of suicide in Newfoundland and Labrador requires a strategic and concerted effort by the health, education, justice and social systems. Suicide prevention is everyone's responsibility.



The Government will continue to support mental health initiatives to prevent suicide, including:

- Peer-led services;
- Indigenous-led community programs;
- Nationally/provincially-led programs, such as Roots of Hope and Feather Carriers;
- E-mental health programs;
- Mobile crisis response and flexible assertive community treatment teams;
- Supportive housing;
- Suicide bereavement support networks;
- Coordinated and specialized supports for children, youth and emerging adults; and
- Education and training, including Mental Health First Aid, Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST), SafeTALK, Recovery Approach and Brain Story certification.

While much work has been done, there remains a need to improve resilience to reduce the incidence of suicide in Newfoundland and Labrador. **Our Path of Resilience** will foster a culture of compassion, understanding and action across health, education, justice, and social services systems by supporting the role of people with lived and living experience of suicide loss and/or attempt as experts and partners in system reform. The plan includes 12 actions focusing on community mental health literacy and capacity building; socially-equitable prevention, intervention and follow-up services; and monitoring, surveillance and research.

Our Path of Resilience

Community Mental Health Literacy and Capacity Building

1. Provide education and training to help communities recognize signs of suicide risk, build comfort in talking about suicide, create safer communities by reducing access to means of harm, and increase awareness of services.
2. Provide resources to Indigenous partners to develop and sustain life promotion initiatives that connect people with land, culture, and language to foster healing and increase accessibility to basic needs and social determinants of health.
3. Promote the **National Standard of Canada for Psychological Health and Safety in the Workplace** and workplace wellness programs to address compassion fatigue, stress, caregiver responsibilities and other mental health issues.
4. Provide media outlets with guidelines and training on reporting responsibly about suicide.



Socially-Equitable Prevention, Intervention and Follow-Up Services

5. Develop and implement a provincial trauma program, with the goal of providing timely and appropriate care and treatment province-wide to children, youth and adults.
6. Expand suicide bereavement and grief/loss support groups and networks throughout the province, and ensure appropriate training and support is provided for families and facilitators.
7. Provide training in person-centred/family-centred care, intergenerational trauma and trauma-informed care to foster a culture of compassion and understanding across systems, including health, education, justice and social services.
8. Expand mobile crisis response teams and case management supports, and use technology, including a provincial three-digit number for rapid access and connection to mental health and addiction support and crisis intervention services.
9. Foster connection to self, family, nature, culture and community, and promote the uptake of creative art, music and recreation-based wellness activities and therapies.
10. Develop and implement consistent provincial policies and practices for risk assessments, evidence-based interventions, outreach and follow-up supports for individuals who experience the following: suicidal thoughts, attempts, or behaviours; overdose; multiple visits to emergency departments or mobile crisis response; have a loved one at risk of suicide or overdose; and/or have lost a loved one to suicide.
11. Develop and adapt materials and programming for loved ones who have experienced suicide loss that include mental health, legal, financial, and other practical supports and resources.
12. Formalize provincial perinatal mental health program for expecting and new families.

Monitoring, Surveillance and Research

To fulfill this plan, Government will use a public health approach to develop a comprehensive provincial suicide monitoring and surveillance system to track changes in suicide-related outcomes, identify clusters, monitor risk and protective factors, uncover subpopulation differences, evaluate the impact of programs and policies, and use data to inform evidence-based decision making, with particular emphasis on social determinants of health and populations that face higher suicide risk.