



## Statement for the Retention of the Statewide Office of Suicide Prevention in the Executive Office of the Governor

Suicide is a costly problem for the State of Florida that is exacerbated by stigma, lack of public and professional awareness, absence of widespread prevention policies, and environmental factors such as economic hardship. Suicide is the second leading cause of death for the 25 – 34 age group: Florida's most productive employees and emerging workforce leaders. The State of Florida has been a leader in the development of a statewide suicide prevention strategy, developed by the existing Statewide Office of Suicide Prevention and Florida Suicide Prevention Coordinating Council. This special office has a low cost annual budget of just \$150,000, working effectively with a coalition of statute mandated stakeholders. The Office has additionally procured grant funds of \$1.5 million over 3 years and is currently working on another grant for the same amount.

- The rate of suicide in Florida is 15.2/100,000 with 2,854 suicides reported in 2009. During the same year there were approximately 32,000 attempts that did not result in death (NIMH estimates 11 attempts for each suicide).
- Suicide eclipsed the incidence of Homicide as a leading cause of death for Floridians in 2009 by more than 2 to 1:  
Homicide 1135 Suicide 2854  
([http://www.fadaa.org/services/resource\\_center/PD/WebEx/AAD%20in%20Florida%20webinar.pdf](http://www.fadaa.org/services/resource_center/PD/WebEx/AAD%20in%20Florida%20webinar.pdf))
- The Florida Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) found that in 2009, about 89,400 students seriously considered attempting suicide during the past 12 months. Roughly 71,500 students made a plan about how they would commit suicide during that time period. During the survey year, 45,300 students actually attempted suicide one or more times.  
(Bureau of Epidemiology for the Florida Department of Education's Office of Healthy Schools Project Number U87/CCU001239-02)
- The economic cost for avoidable loss of life is high. The average VSL (Value of a Statistical Life) is \$4.3 million. (Rosen et al., 2008). Based on 2,854 Florida deaths by suicide in 2009, the value of statistical life cost to Florida was in excess of \$12 billion.
- In 2009 there were 2,854 suicides and another 9,840 hospitalizations for non-fatal self-inflicted injuries. The median admission charge for non-fatal self-inflicted injury hospitalizations was \$16,120; total charges exceeded \$278 million. Commercial insurance covered 26% of those costs; the remainder by self-pay, underinsurance or by public medical care coverage systems. (Office of Injury Prevention, Florida Department of Health)
- Depression in all of its forms is a gateway illness to suicide. The economic burden of depression on American industry is incredibly high and growing. Research suggests that workplace depression costs a staggering \$51.5 billion per year in the United States. The largest component of these costs, an estimated \$33 billion, is in lost work, productivity and absenteeism. Approximately 225 million workdays are lost annually due to productivity. (© POINT DE VUE COMMUNICATIONS INC. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED- Published by the State of Wisconsin Employee Benefit News, 2007)

It is clear that the problem of suicide places a costly burden on the economy of Florida. We also know that the incidence of suicide can be reduced by a comprehensive strategy approach of public education, professional training, early intervention support programs for identified at risk populations, including teenagers, young adults and the elderly, as well as by improved hospital and medical provider screening and recordkeeping strategies to enable a better understanding of the problem and the development of improved early intervention strategies.

The State of Florida's initiatives have been recognized as a model for the nation. Because of the diversity of grassroots advocacy agencies, universities and providers who participate in the implementation of the Florida Strategy for the Prevention of Suicide, it is important that the Statewide Office of Suicide Prevention (SOSP) continue to be located within the Executive Office of the Governor. From that position, the Office will have the flexibility to work across all government boundaries with agencies throughout the State of Florida, including the Department of Education, AHCA, the Agency for Persons with Disabilities, the Florida National Guard, Elder Affairs and DCF to name a few that must address the problems of Suicide.

[www.FloridaSuicidePrevention.org](http://www.FloridaSuicidePrevention.org)

Contact Mr. Terry Smith, Chairman, 386-503-7654, [tvss@bellsouth.net](mailto:tvss@bellsouth.net)  
SAVE the DATE: **March 30, 2011 Florida Suicide Prevention Day at the Capital**