

Preventing Farmer Suicides

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Farmers are more than five times as likely to commit suicide as the general population. A CDC report identified the overall rates of suicide among the general population at 16.1 per 100,000. During the same year rates of suicide among agriculture and natural resources workers (i.e., farming, fishing, and forestry) were drastically higher at 84.5 suicides per 100,000 persons. Furthermore, U.S. suicide rates among the general population increased by 24 percent from 1999 to 2014. However, studies have found community support can decrease stress, depression, and suicide.

Warning signs for suicide

- Anxiety
- Depression
- Withdrawal from friends and activities
- Alcohol and/or drug abuse
- Refusing to take or hoarding medication
- Aggressive behavior or irritability
- Making a will or final arrangements
- Giving away possessions
- Talking of or hinting at suicide
- Suggesting people would be better off without him/her
- Frequent thoughts of suicide with a plan in mind

While the risk of a friend committing suicide may seem relatively low, it's estimated that between 10 and 20 percent of people in the U.S. think about suicide at some time in their lives. In other words, one or two of your 10 closest friends may consider suicide at some point. The negative

thoughts associated with stress and depression can be changed however, and **people do get better.**

If someone talks of suicide, makes comments hinting at suicide, suggests that people would be better off without him/her, or exhibits other warning signs, **ask that person if they are considering suicide.** Asking a person if they are contemplating suicide has not been shown to cause the person to consider suicide if they weren't already. If someone is already considering suicide, asking them about it has not been shown to make the person more likely to make an attempt.

People struggling with stress, depression, or suicidal thoughts may think their feelings are too much of a burden to place on someone else. When you ask directly about their mental health and intentions, you are telling them it is not too much and that you care about them.

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) recommends the following guidelines to help someone who may be thinking about committing suicide:

- Ask them if they are thinking about killing themselves.
- Listen without judging and show you care.
- Stay with the person (or make sure the person is in a private, secure place with another caring person) until you can get further help.
- Remove any objects that could be used in a suicide attempt.
- Call SAMHSA's **National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-TALK (8255)** and follow their guidance.
- If danger for self-harm seems imminent, call 911.

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Resources

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 800-273-TALK. 24-hour, toll-free crisis hotline. En Espanol: 888-628-9454. Tele-interpreters are available for over 150 languages using the English language site. <http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org/>
SAMHSA's National Helpline (Treatment Referral Routing Service): 1-800-662-HELP (4357). 24-hour free and confidential treatment referral and

information about mental and/or substance use disorders, prevention, and recovery in English and Spanish. Website: www.samhsa.gov/find-help/national-helpline

For more information, see the *Preventing Farm-related Stress, Depression, Substance Abuse, and Suicide* publication by Dudensing, Towne, and McCord.

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