

Emergency Department - Means Restriction Education A Youth Suicide Prevention Strategy

Problem:

Suicide is the second leading cause of death among youth ages 10-24. In 2011 alone, 121 youth died by suicide, surpassing the number of deaths by motor vehicle crashes (108)¹. As one of the leading causes of death among youth in Colorado, suicide prevention is a top priority of the Colorado Injury and Violence Prevention Strategic Plan and is incorporated into CDPHE's Mental Health/Substance Abuse Winnable Battle.

Means Restriction Education:

Means Restriction Education (MRE) is an effective programmatic intervention to reduce access to lethal means of suicide (e.g. firearms, poisons, medications, rope, chemicals and other hazardous materials). Means restriction is an important part of a comprehensive approach to suicide prevention and is listed on the Suicide Prevention Resource Center's Best Practice Registry.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) supports MRE as an effective suicide prevention strategy with a large-scale impact on population health. The Injury, Suicide and Violence Prevention (ISVP) Branch has funding from the CDC's Core Violence and Injury Prevention Program to implement MRE interventions in 10 hospital emergency departments in Colorado over the next three years.

MRE protocols include teaching emergency department personnel to assess whether a person at risk for suicide has access to lethal means and training them to work with caregivers to develop a safety plan that limits access to all lethal means in the home until the person is no longer feeling suicidal. Means Restriction Education has the potential to reduce the number of suicide deaths and decrease hospital readmission rates by reducing the number of subsequent suicide attempts.

Work Completed to Date:

The ISVP Branch is currently collaborating with Children's Hospital Colorado and the Colorado Schools of Public Health Pediatric Injury Prevention, Education and Research Program to plan the implementation of a standardized Means Restriction Education Program within the emergency department at Children's Hospital. The ISVP Branch established a partnership with the Harvard School of Public Health's Injury Control Research Center to develop an emergency department adaptation of the Counseling on Access to Lethal Means Training. This training protocol will be provided to Children's Hospital emergency department personnel to educate parents of youth at risk for suicide about ways to reduce easy access to all lethal means in the home.

Piloting and assessing the MRE Program at Children's Hospital will lay the foundation for implementing MRE in hospital emergency departments statewide. This will increase the percentage of caregivers who know to reduce lethal means accessible to youth at risk for suicide. House Bill 1140 allows CDPHE's Office of Suicide Prevention to collaborate with hospitals to disseminate suicide prevention information. The ISVP Branch will partner with hospital administrators and emergency department staff to identify hospitals interested in MRE resources and training.

¹ Colorado Health Information Dataset, Health Statistics Section, Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment, 2006 - 2011.