

# GOAL 5

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INDIVIDUALS, FAMILIES,  
COMMUNITIES, AND GOVERNMENTS  
TAKE OWNERSHIP TO PREVENT  
SUICIDES AND SELF-HARM IN ALASKA.

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**5.1 Objective:** Coordinate prevention efforts to ensure that Alaskans have access to a comprehensive suicide prevention system.

**5.2 Objective:** Support and improve the system to assist individuals in crisis.

# GOAL 5: SUICIDE PREVENTION

Suicide is preventable. Humans by nature are resilient, but events and adverse experiences can weaken that resiliency to a point at which individuals become at risk for suicide. This goal focuses on mending the support system through the entire continuum of wellness promotion, suicide prevention, crisis intervention, and postvention. If every one of us learned about suicide and the risks and protective factors involved, we would be better prepared to prevent suicide in our families and communities. While each suicide or attempted suicide can be as unique as the person who experiences it, there are ways to address the “web of causation” – the multiple social, emotional, environmental, and health factors involved.

**RESILIENCY:** a class of phenomena characterized by good outcomes in spite of serious threats to adaptation or development<sup>1</sup>

**POSTVENTION:** an organized response in the aftermath of a suicide to accomplish any one or more of the following:

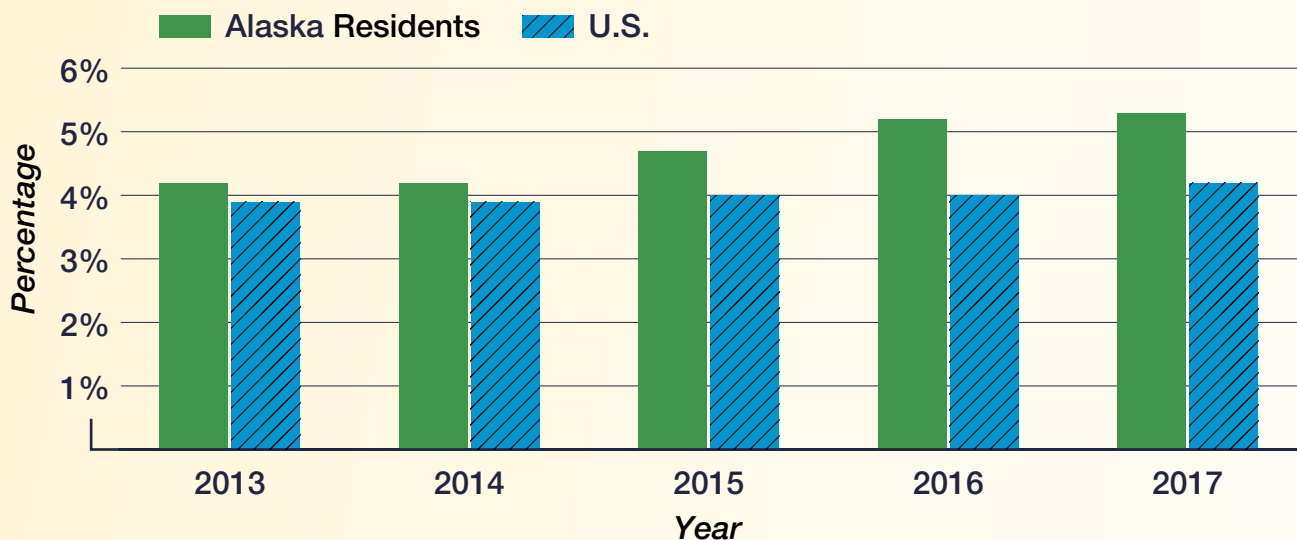
- Facilitate the healing of individuals from the grief and distress of suicide loss
- Mitigate other negative effects of exposure to suicide
- Prevent suicide among people who are at high risk after exposure to suicide<sup>2</sup>

More than 90% of people who die by suicide have depression or another diagnosable, treatable mental health or substance use disorder.<sup>3</sup> Statistics from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) show that 193 Alaskans died by suicide in 2017, resulting in a statewide suicide rate of 25.8/100,000. Alaska’s rate remains nearly double the national average.<sup>4</sup>

In 2017, 45.4% of Alaska adolescents (high school students) felt comfortable seeking help from an adult in their life (besides their parents) to discuss serious problems.<sup>5</sup> One way both youth and adults can seek help is by calling the suicide prevention hotline referred to as the Careline Alaska, which is available 24/7 with skilled staff. Careline Alaska responded to 20,976 calls in fiscal year 2018.<sup>6</sup>

Recasting the Net, Alaska’s suicide prevention plan for 2018-2022, challenges local communities and regional and state government to work individually and collectively to prevent suicide. The objectives and strategies in Strengthening the System align with Recasting the Net.

Figure 9: Percentage of Adults Reporting Serious Thoughts of Suicide



**Source**

Data from Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration National Survey on Drug Use and Health

**5.1 Objective:** Coordinate prevention efforts to ensure that Alaskans have access to a comprehensive suicide prevention system.

- a. Strategy:** Recognize the connections between suicide, substance misuse, mental illness, and adverse life events.
- b. Strategy:** Ensure that DHSS agencies/providers have guidance and training on referral supports and services and prevention approaches.
- c. Strategy:** Provide financial and technical support for implementation of practice-informed suicide prevention strategies.
- d. Strategy:** Provide safe and effective messaging for suicide prevention that is consistent with Suicide Prevention Resource Center guidelines.

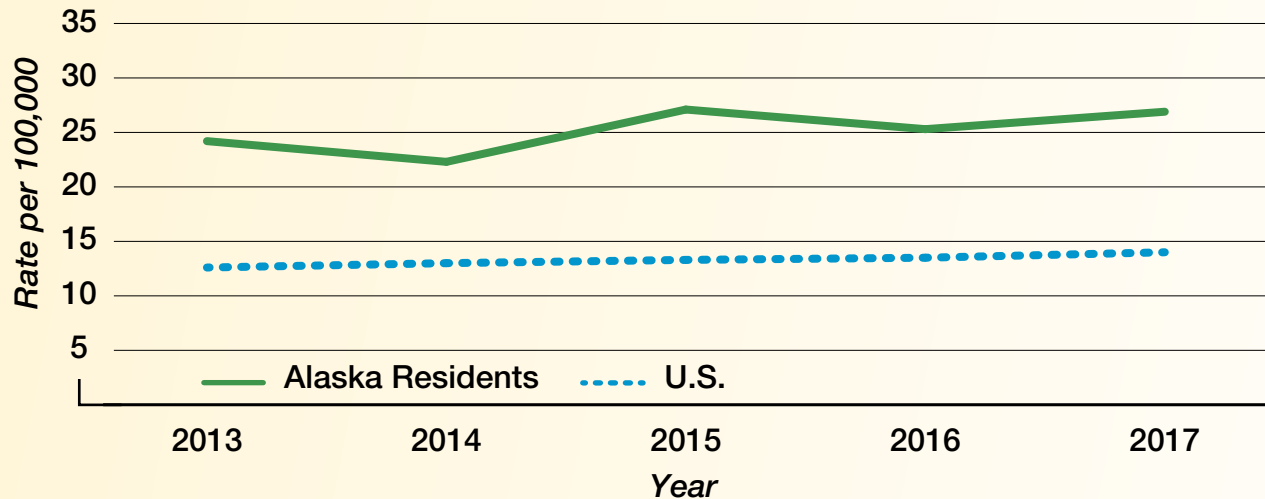
**5.2 Objective:** Support and improve the system to assist individuals in crisis.

- a. Strategy:** Maintain effective Careline Alaska services to all Alaskans in crisis.
- b. Strategy:** Provide public education on mental health and suicide.

**UNIVERSAL SCREENING:** the systematic assessment of all children within a given class, grade, school building, or school district, on academic and/or social-emotional indicators that the school personnel and community have agreed are important<sup>7</sup>

- c. Strategy:** Ensure Alaskans who encounter the continuum of care are universally screened for behavioral health conditions and suicidal ideation.
- d. Strategy:** Develop a continuum of community-based crisis intervention services to support beneficiaries in community settings whenever possible.

**Figure 10: Suicide (rate per 100,000)**



**Source**

Data from Alaska Department of Health and Social Services - Health Analytics & Vital Records; U.S. Centers for Disease Control & Prevention National Center for Health Statistics

## ENDNOTES

1. [https://www.ihs.gov/telebehavioral/includes/themes/newihstheme/display\\_objects/documents/slides/nationalchildandadolescent/traumainformedcare\\_120115.pdf](https://www.ihs.gov/telebehavioral/includes/themes/newihstheme/display_objects/documents/slides/nationalchildandadolescent/traumainformedcare_120115.pdf)
2. <https://www.sprc.org/comprehensive-approach/postvention>
3. 21. Isometsa, E.T., (2001). Psychological Autopsy Studies - A Review. *European Psychiatry*, 16(7), 379-85. May 14, 2019, from <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/11728849>
4. <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/pressroom/states/alaska/alaska.htm>
5. Alaska Department of Health and Social Services, Division of Public Health, Youth Risk Behavior Survey, 2017 Survey Results.
6. Casting the Net Upstream: Promoting Wellness to Prevent Suicide Annual Report 2017: [http://dhss.alaska.gov/SuicidePrevention/Documents/pdfs/CTN\\_Implementation\\_Report\\_2017.pdf](http://dhss.alaska.gov/SuicidePrevention/Documents/pdfs/CTN_Implementation_Report_2017.pdf)
7. <https://www.pbis.org/>