



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

## News Release

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GOVERNOR

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### **VIOLENCE IN HAWAII** **First Violence Prevention Status Report Released**

Honolulu — Hawaii has higher rates than the national average for self-directed violence including youth reported suicide attempts and youth reports on fear of going to school, according to “Ending Violence: A 2004 Status Report on Violence Prevention in Hawaii”. The report also highlights Hawaii’s lower than national rates for interpersonal violence, including homicide, violent crime, rape, and youth fights.

This status report is the first of its kind to take a comprehensive look at violence prevention efforts across the state. It uses a framework developed by the World Health Organization to examine ways of preventing interpersonal and self-directed violence.

“When people think of violence their images usually involves two people, but self-directed violence like suicide is a major public health concern and silent epidemic“ said Dan Yahata of Kamehameha Schools and Chair of the Suicide Prevention Steering Committee. “This report highlights the need for Hawaii to focus attention and resources on suicide prevention.”

“The status report makes clear recommendations to address suicide specifically and violence in general,” said Debbie Goebert of Prevent Violence Hawaii, a community organization dedicated to preventing violence in homes, schools, workplaces and communities.

(more)

## Systemic Strategies to Prevent Suicide

Adapted from: The Injury Prevention and Control Program in Hawaii's Department of Health.

Increase knowledge and understanding of suicide prevention by:

- Revising and implementing suicide prevention training for gatekeepers. A "gatekeeper" is any individual who interacts with others at work, at play, and in community settings (i.e. other than the medical setting). The Department of Health already developed a training package for Native Hawaiians that can be adapted for broader use.
- Launching a public awareness campaign aimed at increasing public knowledge of suicide as a serious public health problem and dispelling myths about suicide will support a shift in beliefs and behaviors that allow for early intervention at the community level.
- Promoting and supporting research on suicide and suicide prevention. Suicide as a field of research is still in its early stages and knowledge of factors relating to suicide and suicide attempts is limited.

Broaden access to screening and services by developing and promoting effective clinical and professional practices and policies. It is important to develop and strengthen a service system that raises awareness of services available, ensures statewide access for screening and appropriate care to every person as needed, ensures culturally sensitive approaches, and provides flexibility in health insurance reimbursements for mental health services.

### Individual Strategies to Prevent Suicide

**Know the Risk and Protective Factors** – Research has identified the following risk and protective factors (DHHS 1999). Although these risk factors don't cause suicide, they do increase the chances that people will harm themselves.

Risk Factors	Protective Factors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Previous suicide attempt(s)</li> <li>• History of mental disorders, particularly depression</li> <li>• History of alcohol and substance abuse</li> <li>• Family history of suicide</li> <li>• Family history of child maltreatment</li> <li>• Feelings of hopelessness</li> <li>• Impulsive or aggressive tendencies</li> <li>• Barriers to accessing mental health treatment</li> <li>• Loss (relational, social, work, or financial)</li> <li>• Physical illness</li> <li>• Easy access to lethal methods</li> <li>• Unwillingness to seek help because of the stigma attached to mental health and substance abuse disorders or suicidal thoughts</li> <li>• Cultural and religious beliefs—for instance, the belief that suicide is a noble resolution of a personal dilemma</li> <li>• Local epidemics of suicide</li> <li>• Isolation, a feeling of being cut off from other people</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Effective clinical care for mental, physical, and substance abuse disorders</li> <li>• Easy access to a variety of clinical interventions and support for help seeking</li> <li>• Family and community support</li> <li>• Support from ongoing medical and mental health care relationships</li> <li>• Skills in problem solving, conflict resolution, and nonviolent handling of disputes</li> <li>• Cultural and religious beliefs that discourage suicide and support self-preservation instincts</li> </ul>

**Reference**

Department of Health and Human Services. The Surgeon General's call to action to prevent suicide. Washington (DC): Department of Health and Human Services; 1999. Available online from: URL: <http://www.surgeongeneral.gov/library/calltoaction/default.htm>.

**Talk to Them** – If you notice several risk factors in someone and are concerned for their safety, approach them in a safe setting and have a conversation about the issue. If someone tells you they are thinking about suicide take them seriously, listen openly, do not leave them alone and get professional help.

**Get Professional Help** – Help is available from many different resources.

- Call your doctor's office.
- For help on O'ahu call 832-3100, on the neighbor islands call 1-800-753-6879. The Hawai'i State Department of Health's Adult Mental Health Division offers experienced professionals to help in times of mental health crisis. Service is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
- Call the toll-free, 24-hour hotline of the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-TALK (1-800-273-8255) to be connected to a trained counselor at a suicide crisis center nearest you.
- Call 911 for emergency services. OR go to the nearest hospital emergency room.

Key recommendations in the report include: the creation of a state violence prevention action plan to increase coordination and improve services; enhancing capacity for collecting useful data; promoting primary prevention responses; and integrating violence prevention into social and educational policies.

“Learning about violence is the first step in strengthening our prevention efforts, said Linda Rosen, M.D., Hawaii State Department of Health. “This report reminds us that there are many types of violence and that we need to work together to prevent all of them in Hawaii.”

“Ending Violence: A 2004 Status Report on Violence Prevention in Hawaii” was produced by the University of Hawaii’s Social Science Research Institute in collaboration with the Department of Health’s Injury Prevention and Control Program, the Department of Health’s Maternal and Child Health Branch, and Prevent Violence Hawaii.

For more information or to get involved in your community contact Prevent Violence Hawaii at 956-7528.

For a copy of “Ending Violence: A 2004 Status Report on Violence Prevention in Hawaii” visit the Department of Health’s web site at [www.hawaii.gov/health](http://www.hawaii.gov/health) .

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