

At-Risk Populations

Between 15 - 20% of youth will experience at least one depressive episode before they reach adulthood. There are protective factors that can support youth mental health, but research shows that there are also certain populations or groups of people that are at higher risk for depression and suicide.

Before age 15, major depression occurs about as frequently in boys as girls; after age 15, twice as many girls experience it. Girls are more likely than boys to attempt suicide but attempts by boys more frequently result in death.

Youth who are:

Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual - Almost a quarter (23.4%) of LGBTQ high school students reported attempting suicide in the prior 12 months. This rate is nearly four times higher than the rate reported among heterosexual students (6.4%). 45% of LGBTQ youth seriously considered attempting suicide in the past year. Almost 60% of LGBTQ youth reported experiencing symptoms of depression.

Transgender - Nearly 1 in 5 transgender and nonbinary youth attempted suicide in the past year and more than half of transgender and nonbinary youth seriously considered suicide. More than three-quarters of transgender and nonbinary youth reported experiencing symptoms of anxiety and depression in the past year.

Indigenous People - Suicide rates are the highest among Non-Hispanic American Indian/Alaska Native (AI/AN). The AI/AN population can be at higher risk due to historical trauma, adverse childhood experiences, and lack of connections to necessary resources.

Trauma -Exposure to adverse experiences in childhood, such as physical, sexual, emotional abuse and neglect, and living in homes with violence, mental health, substance abuse problems and other instability, is also associated with increased risk for suicide and suicide attempts.

Youth who are Bullied - Bullying is unwanted, aggressive behavior among school-age children that involves a real or perceived power imbalance. Bullying (including youth who report bullying and experience being bullied) has serious and lasting negative effects on mental health and a child's overall wellbeing. Children who experience bullying are at an increased risk for depression, anxiety, and suicide.

Rural areas -Suicide rates can vary substantially across geographic regions, and rural areas experience much higher rates of suicide than urban areas. Suicide rates increase as population density decreases and an area becomes more rural.

We know that if an individual has increased risk factors or is a member of an at-risk population then it is even more important for them to have numerous protective factors. The number one most important protective factor that an individual is a supportive and trusting relationship. We also know that there is a lot we can do to build protective factors and support the well-being of today's youth.