



## Vilas County Public Health Department

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### **National Suicide Prevention Week, September 8 – 14, 2019**

September is National Suicide Prevention Awareness Month. This month we want to reach out to those affected by suicide, raise awareness, and connect people who have thoughts of suicide to resources in order to get help. It is also important to ensure that everyone knows the resources that are available to talk about this difficult topic.

From 2007 through 2011, there was an average of 724 deaths by suicide per year. Wisconsin suicide rates are the 10th leading cause of death for all ages. Vilas County's suicide rate is 21.2% per 100,000 residents, which is almost double that of the National rate, which is 13.5% per 100,00.

Suicidal thoughts can affect anyone no matter their age, gender, or background. In fact, suicide is often the result of an untreated mental health condition. Suicidal thoughts, although common, may show that someone may have more serious concerns or issues.

"This month, we encourage the community to learn the warning signs of suicide, know the local resources, and learn how to start a conversation," said Tammi Boers, Vilas County Public Health Department. "You may save a life!"

Warning signs per the per the QPR Institute include the following:

- Any previous suicide attempts.
- Acquiring a gun or stockpiling pills.
- Co-occurring depression, moodiness, hopelessness.
- Putting personal affairs in order.
- Giving away prized possessions.
- Sudden interest or disinterest in religion.
- Drug or alcohol abuse, or relapse after a period of recovery.
- Unexplained anger, aggression and irritability.

Tips on starting a conversation per the QPR Institute include:

- If you suspect the person is thinking of suicide, ask the person directly, "Are you suicidal?"
- Make sure not to sound like you're passing judgment. Instead, reassure them that you understand and care.

- Stay calm – just because someone is having thoughts of suicide, it does not mean they are in immediate danger. Take the time to calmly listen to what they have to say.
- Reassure them that help is available, and that these feelings are a signal that it's time to talk to a professional.

“If you are not comfortable in asking the question or getting the person the help, they may need, then help them connect to someone they trust. This may be a pastor or priest, their healthcare provider, a mental health provider, or a close family member or friend,” added Heidi Pritzl, a Licensed Clinical Social Worker with Ascension Koller Behavioral Health. “Offer to help them connect in whatever way you’re comfortable with. Sometimes making that first moment of contact can be difficult, especially if it’s to get professional help.”

Below are other resources that can be used to help someone:

- If you or someone you know is in an emergency, call **911** immediately.
- If you are in crisis or are experiencing difficult or suicidal thoughts, call:
  - Tri-County Crisis Number (Forest, Oneida, Vilas): 1-888-299-1188
  - National Crisis Line: 1-800-273-TALK (8255).
  - Veteran’s Crisis Line: 1-800-273-8255 (Press 1)
- If you’re uncomfortable talking on the phone, you can also text 741-741 to be connected to a free, trained crisis counselor on the Crisis Text Line.

Ascension Koller Behavioral Health will be hosting the film, *The Ripple Effect* at Nicolet College on September 25. At the age of 19, Kevin Hines attempted to take his life by jumping from the Golden Gate Bridge and is one of a few survivors. *The Ripple Effect* is a story of Kevin’s journey and the effect that his suicide attempt had on the people in his life. This film is FREE and open to the public. A Mental Health Resource Fair with information on resources and services available in the community will also take place starting at 5:30 p.m. Both events will be held in the Nicolet College Lakeside Center at 5364 College Drive, Rhinelander.

If you are interested in hosting a suicide prevention training called Question, Persuade, Refer (QPR), please contact Tammi Boers, Assistant Director, Vilas County Public Health Department at 715-479-3757 or [taboer@vilascountywi.gov](mailto:taboer@vilascountywi.gov)

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