

Tompkins County Suicide Prevention Coalition  
THREE-YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN 2022-2025  
*Adopted February 24, 2022*

### **Executive Summary**

The Tompkins County Suicide Prevention Coalition (the Coalition) is comprised of health agencies, community organizations, and individual members who share a determination to prevent suicide deaths in our community. It is a collective of volunteers that strives for diverse and inclusive representation and encourages collaboration for achieving goals. The Coalition draws inspiration and purpose from The Watershed Declaration of 2017, a call to action by Tompkins County mental health leaders to renew our community's commitment to suicide prevention.

We believe that the persistent rise in the U.S. suicide rate over the past two decades demands a public health response from communities across the nation. Since 2016, Tompkins County has averaged 12 suicide deaths per year; another 1,600 parents, children, siblings, friends, and spouses may have been negatively impacted by resulting psychological, spiritual, and/or financial loss. Another 300 people in our community may attempt suicide every year. Suicide continues to be the second leading cause of death among Americans aged 10-34; approximately half of the county's population is under 30.

In 2021, the Coalition began considering further concrete steps to prevent suicide deaths in Tompkins County and join the movement to reverse the upward national suicide trend. This Three-Year Strategic Plan 2022-2025 outlines the Coalition's goals and the objectives with which it seeks to achieve them. The Coalition is committed to measuring the results and reporting back to our community during the Strategic Plan's final year.

### **Vision and Mission Statement**

Our vision is for a community where no lives are lost to suicide. Our mission is to use data, science, and collaborations to identify and implement effective suicide prevention strategies for Tompkins County.

### **Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats**

Our strengths are broad representation; existing knowledge and experience; support from county and city political leaders; and partnership with the Suicide Prevention Center of New York.

Our weaknesses are limited human resources and training; current lack of funding; weak connections with rural communities; and limited public health communication.

Our opportunities are leveraging interest in and support for mental health and suicide prevention; and outreach to and collaboration with at-risk populations.

Our threats are persistent generalized stigma around mental health and suicide; addiction and other exacerbating factors; and insufficient diversity and inclusion within the Coalition's membership.

### **Goals and Objectives**

**Goal 1:** Improve the quality and enhance the use of data sources and systems for suicide prevention in Tompkins County.

**Objective 1.1:** Develop a data collection infrastructure to regularly collect timely, high quality, and interpretable data on acute suicide risk (e.g., Emergency Department visits or 911 and Lifeline calls for attempts) as well as upstream risk (e.g., mental health outpatient visits, reports of bullying/harassment).

**Objective 1.2:** Establish a county dashboard that integrates data from multiple sources for the purposes of surveillance, monitoring program/policy impact, and informing the Coalition's planning and activities.

**Objective 1.3:** Use data to guide the Coalition’s activities.

**Evaluation Plan for Goal 1:** Determine whether a data collection infrastructure and county dashboard have been created, and whether high quality data is being collected; and determine whether the data is being used to develop future Coalition goals and objectives.

**Goal 2:** Advance quality improvement for suicide care in all Tompkins County healthcare and behavioral health settings.

**Objective 2.1:** Promote and facilitate implementation of the Zero Suicide Model in the major healthcare and behavioral health settings.

**Objective 2.2:** Promote and facilitate implementation of the Zero Suicide Model in primary care practices and in clinical therapy practices.

**Objective 2.3:** Form a Zero Suicide Work Group comprised of leading health and mental health providers to share ideas, experiences, and challenges, and lead collaborative, sustainable efforts to implement the Zero Suicide Model throughout Tompkins County.

**Objective 2.4:** Secure the appointment of a Zero Suicide Coordinator, and funding for the position, to manage and assist education, training, and other collaborative activities supporting implementation of the Zero Suicide Model.

**Evaluation Plan for Goal 2:** Determine the number of healthcare and behavioral health providers who committed to adopting the Zero Suicide Model and the stage level of their implementation efforts; determine whether a Zero Suicide Work Group has been formed and has driven implementation efforts; and determine whether a Zero Suicide Coordinator has been appointed, whether funding has been secured for the position, and if meaningful collaborative activities have resulted.

**Goal 3:** Reduce suicide attempts in the youth population, including students attending colleges in Tompkins County.

**Objective 3.1:** Promote and facilitate suicide awareness activities in schools and in the community.

**Objective 3.2:** Promote and facilitate “gatekeeper” training such as Mental Health First Aid in schools and in the community.

**Objective 3.3:** Promote and facilitate suicide prevention programming for students attending Cornell University, Ithaca College, and Tompkins Cortland Community College.

**Evaluation Plan for Goal 3:** Determine whether data indicates a reduction in suicides and suicide attempts in the 34-and-under population; determine the number of Coalition-driven suicide awareness activities and gatekeeper training programs have taken place.

**Goal 4:** Reduce access to lethal means for suicide within high-risk demographic populations as determined by national, state, and local data.

**Objective 4.1:** Promote and facilitate suicide prevention awareness programming related to firearm safety and suicide death by firearms.

**Objective 4.2:** Promote and facilitate suicide prevention programming related to suicide death by drug overdose.

**Evaluation Plan for Goal 4:** Determine if the Coalition identified high-risk populations in Tompkins County; determine whether there is evidence that relevant lethal means have been reduced for those populations; determine the number of Coalition-driven lethal means reduction programs have taken place.

**Goal 5:** Advocate for policies and practices designed to prevent suicides in the community.

**Objective 5.1:** Request and receive public support, funding, and/or grant assistance for the Coalition's goals and objectives from the Tompkins County Legislature, municipal governments within the county, relevant federal and state agencies, and nonprofit organizations.

**Objective 5.2:** Promote and facilitate the creation of initiatives to provide suicide-related public health information to the community.

**Objective 5.3:** Support legislation in the New York State Legislature for full funding for the enhancement of crisis response services aligned with the introduction of the 9-8-8 suicide prevention lifeline number in 2022.

**Objective 5.4:** Promote awareness in the community of ways members of the public can become advocates for improved mental health care.

**Evaluation Plan for Goal 5:** Determine whether the Coalition made requests and received support from county, municipal, state, federal, or nonprofit sources; determine how many Coalition-driven public information initiatives have taken place; determine whether the Coalition took any steps to support crisis response services legislation.