

Suicide Prevention Partnerships Within Tennessee: A Qualitative Study

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Introduction

- Suicide continues to be a leading cause of death for Tennesseans with more than 1,100 people dying by suicide in 2018.
- Over the past five years, Tennessee's suicide rate (deaths per 100,000 people) has increased by 15% and has remained higher than the average national rate.
- Centerstone's Institute was awarded a contract to evaluate Tennessee Department of Health's (TDH) Comprehensive Suicide Prevention Program.
- As part of the larger evaluation, Centerstone conducted qualitative interviews with TDH partners to assess suicide prevention partnerships among organizations within Tennessee.

Method

- Qualitative data were collected during Spring 2022.
- Participants were recruited through The Tennessee Department of Health (TDH) quarterly Suicide Prevention task force meeting in August, 2022.
- Interested parties were contacted from a pool of N=10 participants working in various areas of suicide prevention throughout the state of Tennessee.
- Interviews were scheduled, recorded, and transcribed by researchers for further analysis.

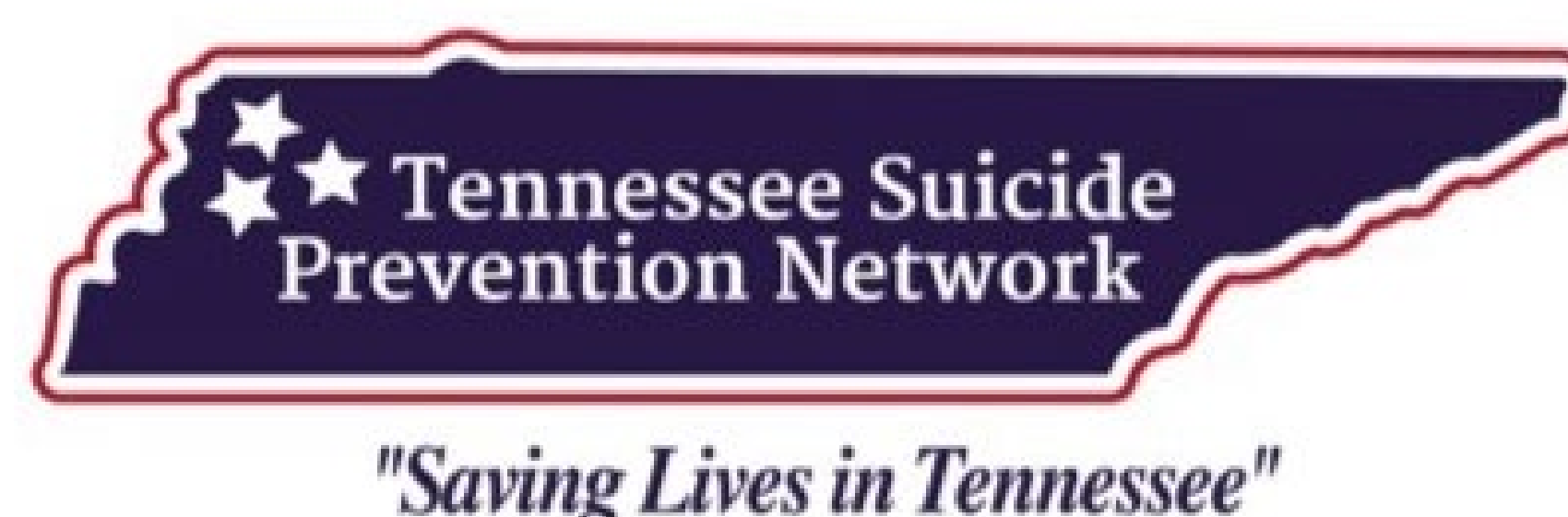
Analyses

- Data were analyzed using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006).
- Interview transcripts were read and re-read by research staff to become familiar with the data.
- Next, data were coded using an open coding approach with the goal of summarizing responses into meaningful groups or themes.
- The initial codes were reviewed and organized into larger themes.

Organization-level Suicide Prevention

Average Percent of Time Spent on Suicide Prevention	45%	Partners Serving Rural Areas	90%
Combined Years of Experience	58	Relationships at the State Level Reported as Strong or Good	70%
Committed to Suicide Prevention	100%	Relationships at the Local Level Reported as Strong or Good	70%

Current Community Partnerships



Partnership Gaps and Suggestions for Improvement

"[TDH] continuing to encourage connection and outreach, and educating our communities on what resources are available is crucial."

"I think we need to do a better job of engaging business and community leaders that are not in the field. I think we need to engage philanthropists in this work in Tennessee. There is no major philanthropy source that I'm aware of like in terms of like a big foundation or group that specifically funds mental health or behavioral health work in Tennessee."

"I think something like [quarterly check-ins] would be really beneficial to the rural areas, because a lot of times the rural areas kind of feel like 'hey we're out here but we're really out on an island all by ourselves' and so just having that resource of 'hey I've got someone that I know that I can connect to and say this is what we're struggling with here, are there any best practices out there', I think, having like a call or a meeting that could happen once a quarter would be extremely beneficial."

Results

- Three themes were identified across the data: 1) organization-level suicide prevention, 2) current community partnerships, and 3) partnership gaps and suggestions for improvement.
- Results indicated that TDH partners were committed to suicide prevention across the state of Tennessee.
- While participants felt that suicide prevention partnerships at the state and local level were strong, there was a desire to build further connections within the community.
- Participants shared a number of suggestions for supporting community partnerships and improving suicide prevention across the state of Tennessee, including additional outreach and education opportunities.

Discussion

- The recommendations provided by the evaluation team indicated that program partners wanted to make more connections across the board, specifically with business, philanthropies, churches, and veteran's organizations.
- Proposed suggestions included check-ins specific to rural areas, more outreach and education, and more data sharing.

Outcomes/Lessons Learned

- Despite strong suicide prevention partnerships happening across the state of Tennessee, there is a need/desire for additional community partnerships across the state.
- Further outreach and education on behalf of the Tennessee Department of Health is needed to increase and improve these prevention partnerships.