



**Florida Behavioral
Health Association**

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Contact: Mary Katherine Delegal

marykatherine@floridabha.org

(850) 566-8065

**Staggering Statistics on Suicide Point to Need for Increased Awareness and Efforts,
Especially During National Suicide Prevention Month**

Tallahassee, Fla.—Today is World Suicide Prevention Day – a time to remember those impacted by suicide, and to raise awareness of resources and services available for all Floridians, especially those who may need support.

The Centers for Disease Control recently [conducted](#) a survey on mental health, substance use, and suicidal ideation during COVID-19, and found that more than 4 in 10 Americans struggle with mental health issues stemming from the pandemic. Additionally, nearly 22% of essential workers and 31% of unpaid caregivers also reported seriously considering suicide in the 30 days before the survey.

For Floridians, suicide is unfortunately not a new topic. [According](#) to the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, prior to the pandemic one person died by suicide every three hours in Florida on average. Death by suicide was the eighth leading cause of death in the state, the third leading cause of death for people ages 15-24, and second leading cause of death for people ages 25-34.

Melanie Brown-Woofter, President and CEO of the Florida Behavioral Health Association (FBHA) said, “These staggering statistics are extremely alarming and heart-breaking. While all of September is National Suicide Prevention Awareness Month, today is World Suicide Prevention Day, which allows us to shed light on treatment services and care available for those who have been impacted by suicide or are struggling with suicidal thoughts.”

Recognizing National Suicide Prevention Awareness Month places an emphasis on the need to [increase](#) awareness of mental health advocates and prevention organizations, uplift the voices of survivors in the name of prevention, and highlight that prevention activities are happening year-round in Florida.

In the 2020 Legislative Session, Representative Cyndi Stevenson sponsored and led the effort for the final passage of [HB 1081 \(SB7012\)](#). This bill made several changes to laws relating to

mental health and substance use services, such as requiring Baker Act receiving facilities to provide suicide prevention information resources to minors being released from a facility.

Rep. Stevenson stated that she is proud this bill passed and was signed into law by Governor Ron DeSantis, as she believes it will help prevent death by suicide and save lives.

“Around two-thirds of individuals talked about their intentions before committing suicide,” Stevenson said. “These people are not crying wolf – they are looking for help from friends, family and doctors and do not know where to turn. House Bill 1081 will help those who have reached out for help by providing them prevention information and resources.”

Stevenson continued, “Suicide prevention should not be confined to only one month of action. It must be a conscious effort every single day.”

“We are grateful to have such a strong mental health advocate such as Rep. Stevenson, who supports mental health legislation and deeply cares about these issues that people face every day,” said Brown-Woofter.

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought with it isolation and loneliness, fueling mental health issues such as depression and anxiety. Brown-Woofter added the best thing to do during COVID-19 is to reach out and check-in on your friends and family.

“Often times, it is difficult for people who suffer from depression and anxiety to reach out for help. It is important, especially during times of social-distancing, that we communicate with our friends and make sure they are OK,” Brown-Woofter said.

If you're thinking about suicide, are worried about a friend or loved one, or would like emotional support, the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline is available 24/7 at 1-800-273-TALK (8255).

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The Florida Behavioral Health Association is a non-profit organization that provides statewide leadership on behavioral health policy and practice. FBHA supports member agencies offering services to those in need of mental health and substance use disorder assistance and support. The Association's members include a broad range of provider types, ranging from small specialty organizations to comprehensive treatment organizations with multiple locations within a geographic region. FBHA is the result of a recent merger between the Florida Council for Community Mental Health and the Florida Alcohol and Drug Abuse Association. For more information please visit www.floridabha.org.