

SUICIDE PREVENTION

TUOLUMNE COUNTY | DATA REPORT | 2026

POWER OF CONNECTION

Local efforts to address
suicide prevention

BELONGING MATTERS

A closer look at youth
connectedness and sadness in
Tuolumne County

BY THE NUMBERS

What the latest data tell us about
suicide in our community

CONTENT NOTE

This report contains sensitive topics such as
self-harm and suicide. Please read with care.

*Connection reminds us
that even in our darkest
moments, we do not have
to face them alone.*

BEYOND THE DATA:

The Power of Connection



A MESSAGE FROM THE TUOLUMNE COUNTY HEALTH OFFICER

KIMBERLY FREEMAN, MD, MBA, CPE, FAEMS, FACEP, PARAMEDIC

Tuolumne County Health Officer & EMS Agency Medical Director

Your Tuolumne County Public Health Department works diligently to prevent harms through a variety of services including smoking cessation, substance use education, disease mitigation and prevention, and life vest provision. However, one of the most devastating outcomes we strive to prevent is suicide.

Our world is full of ups and downs and, unfortunately, sometimes the downs are excessive. Most suicides occur within a 3-hour window of time in which the victim feels overwhelming despair and isolation. If that individual had the foresight and tools to recognize the situation as fleeting, to know how to manage it, and to know who to call for help, suicide most often would never be attempted.

We, public health, aim to empower every person to not only help themselves, but also to recognize the lifesaving importance of real human connection. That empowerment starts with this humbling data, each point representing a person. While this data might cause you, the reader, to feel a bit down, there are stories of survival that cannot be put into graphs, as we don't have the data on the people who go through very dark times and successfully move past their despair. As we strive to improve the suicide rate, the path is not necessarily to eliminate all sadness, but rather to elevate coping tools and connection, which is something all of us can do.

Special Thanks

Suicide prevention is a shared community effort.

We extend our sincere gratitude to the organizations, volunteers, professionals, and individuals who dedicate their time, compassion, and expertise to preventing suicide, strengthening connection, and supporting Tuolumne County residents experiencing difficult times. Your work, often happening quietly, one conversation and one connection at a time, makes a meaningful difference in promoting health and well-being in Tuolumne County. Above all, we recognize everyone across Tuolumne County who continues to show up for others, create spaces for connection, and remind people that hope and help are available.

Special thanks to the **Tuolumne County Public Health (TCPH) Epidemiology Unit, California Department of Public Health (CDPH) Research Branches, TCSO Coroner, Tuolumne County Superintendent of Schools, and our local suicide prevention partners** for contributing the data, expertise, perspective, photos, and community knowledge that helped make this report possible.

METHODOLOGY & LIMITATIONS

California Integrated Vital Records System (Cal-IVRS) contains death certificate information for all deaths that occur in Tuolumne County as well as all Tuolumne County residents who died in other California counties. Death certificates were manually coded to identify suicides and method of suicide. The Tuolumne County Coroner, Health Officer, and California Department of Public Health (CDPH) data branches provided input on this project.

- Data is from **2016 to 2025** unless otherwise noted.
- Data accounts only for deaths classified as suicides on the death certificate and were available in the Cal-IVRS system.
- Manner of death listed on death certificates is determined by the coroner. Deaths are not listed as suicide unless there is additional evidence of intent.
- Other self-harm or high-risk substance use behaviors leading to overdoses, may not be classified as suicide.
- Suicidal ideation or attempts are not captured in the following data.
- Data includes only deaths of Tuolumne County residents who died in California (other states, etc. are not included).

DATA

Suicide is a significant and complex public health issue in the United States. In 2024, 48,824 people died by suicide. During the same year, an estimated 14.3 million U.S. adults seriously considered suicide, 4.6 million made a suicide plan, and 2.2 million attempted suicide ([CDC, National Vital Statistics](#)). Beyond its measurable health and economic impacts, suicide has lasting effects on families, friends, and communities.

Suicide is complex and rarely attributable to a single circumstance. Mental and physical health, trauma, loss, isolation, life stressors, and many other factors can contribute to suicide risk. At the same time, connection, access to care, coping skills, supportive environments, and other protective factors can help reduce risk and strengthen resilience.

When reviewing data, it can be easy to see numbers on a page rather than the people they represent.

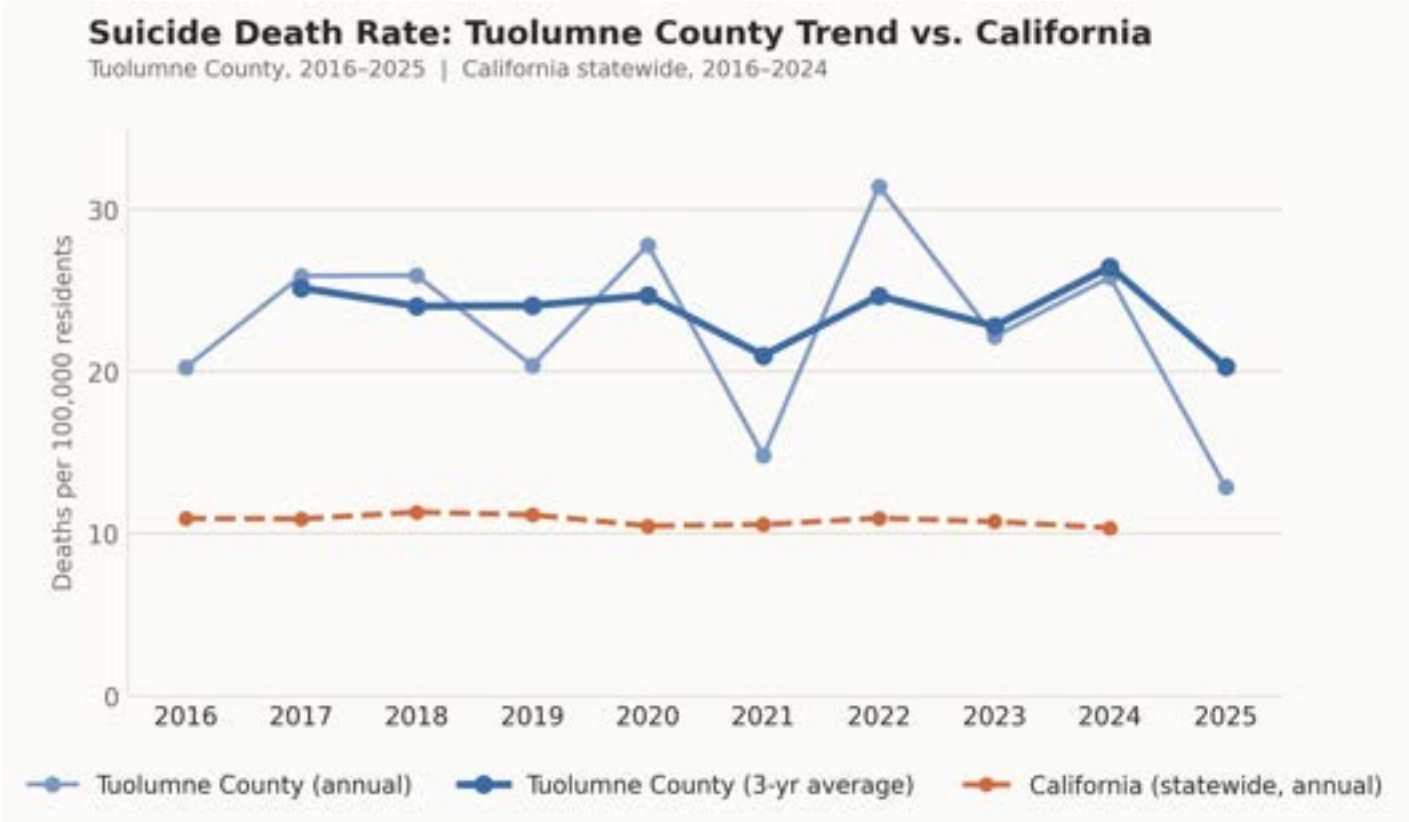
Behind every statistic is a person: a friend, parent, sibling, partner, neighbor, or community member. Each had relationships, experiences, hopes, challenges, and a life that cannot be fully represented in a graph.

The numbers in this report also cannot fully capture the many people who have experienced suicidal thoughts or survived a suicide attempt, nor the stories of those who found support during difficult moments and continued forward.

As we remember those we have lost, we also look toward prevention. By strengthening connection, increasing access to support, and ensuring people know where to turn when they need help, we can work together toward a community where fewer lives are lost to suicide.

HOW TUOLUMNE COUNTY COMPARES

Between 2016 and 2025, 123 Tuolumne County residents died by suicide. The pages that follow describe those deaths as the county's death records report them: when they happened, who they happened to, and how the county compares to California as a whole. Rates in a population this small swing widely from year to year, so most figures here are pooled across the full ten-year window.



Tuolumne County's suicide rate varies sharply from year to year, as is common in a small population, but smoothed to a 3-year average, it has stayed at roughly two and a half times the California statewide rate since 2016.

TCPH analysis of CDPH death registry data, TC residents. California: CDPH EpiCenter.

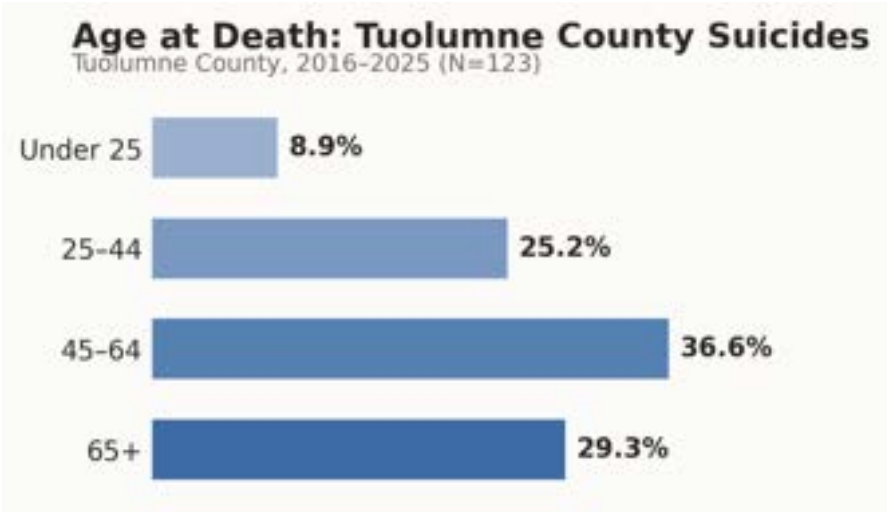
4th
OF 53 COUNTIES

Tuolumne County had the fourth-highest suicide rate of any California county from 2022–2024 (27.7 per 100,000) — more than two-and-a-half times the statewide rate of 10.6 — trailing only three other small, rural counties: Plumas, Siskiyou, and Mariposa.

Ranked among 53 of 58 California counties with enough suicide deaths to report a rate. CDPH EpiCenter, 2022–2024.

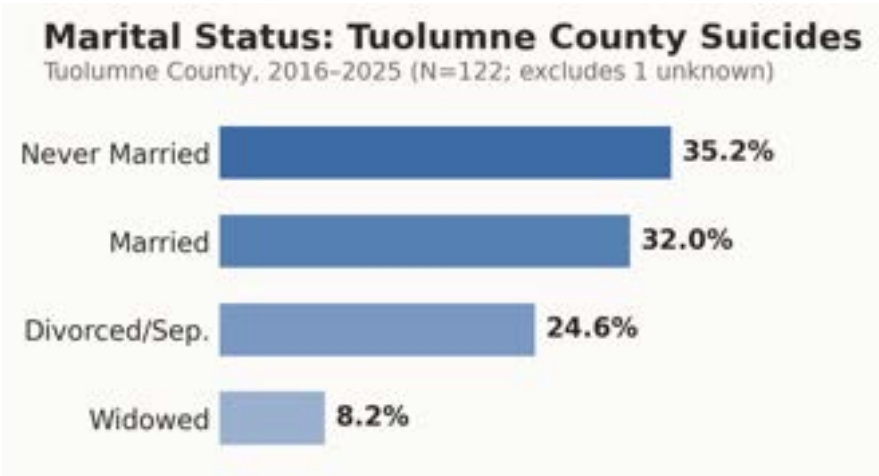
WHO IS AFFECTED

Suicide does not affect everyone in our community equally. Age, sex, marital status, and military service help us better understand how suicide affects different groups within Tuolumne County.



Suicide deaths in Tuolumne County concentrate in midlife and older adulthood: nearly two-thirds occur after age 45 (45–64: 37%; 65+: 29%), while deaths under 25 are less common (9%).

TCPH analysis of CDPH death registry data. TC residents.



Only 32% of people who died by suicide in Tuolumne County were married; most (59%) were never married, divorced, or separated. Social connection, or its absence, is one of the clearest threads running through this data, and it's exactly what the organizations on the following pages are working to rebuild.

TCPH analysis of CDPH death registry data. TC residents.

83%
of Tuolumne County suicide deaths (2016–2025) were male

vs. 17% female · N=123

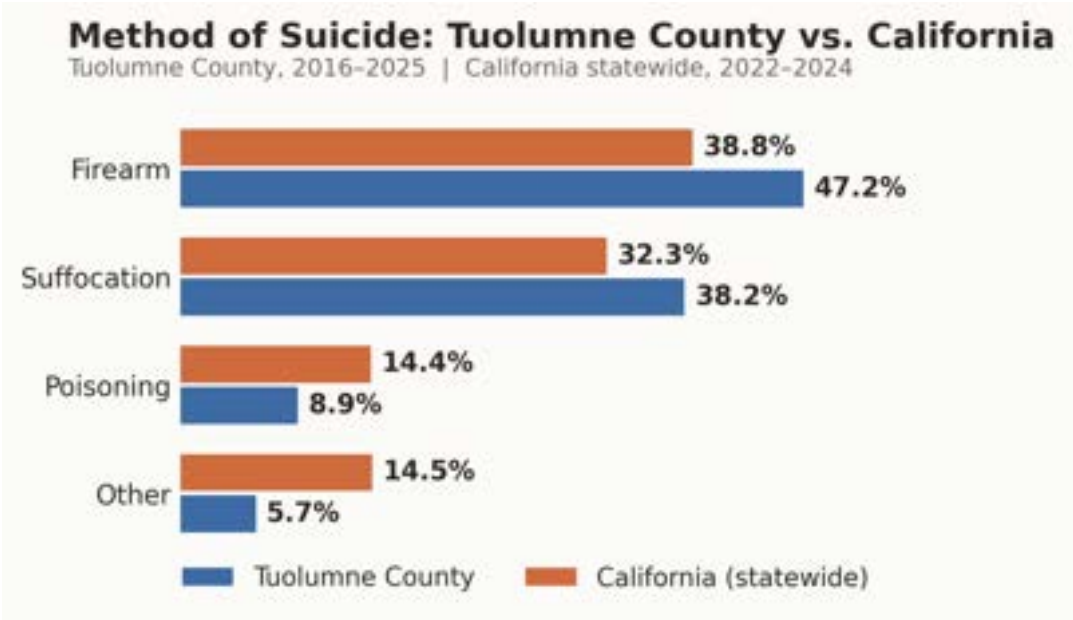
Men account for the overwhelming majority of local suicide deaths: 83%, compared to 78% statewide, consistent with the national and state pattern, but somewhat more pronounced here.

21%
of Tuolumne County suicide deaths (2016–2025) were veterans

26 of 123 · Non-Veteran 77% · Unknown 2%

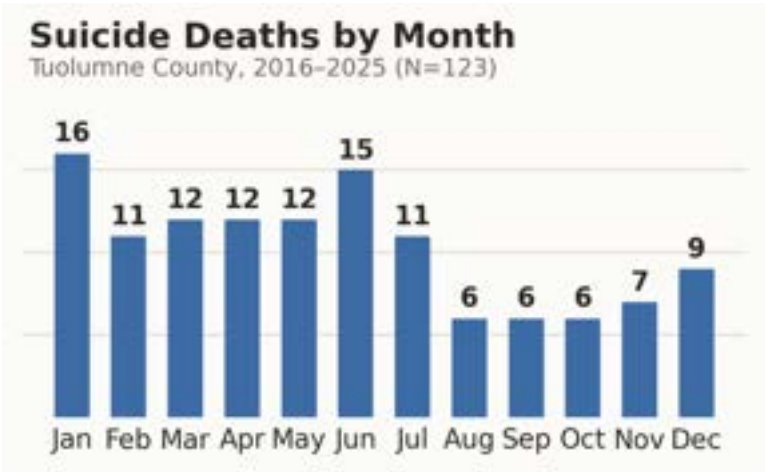
The disproportionate impact of suicide among veterans reflects a pattern seen nationally and underscores the unique challenges veterans may face.

METHOD, PLACE, AND TIMING



Firearms are involved in 47% of Tuolumne County suicides — well above the California rate of 39%. Suffocation is the second most common method in both, and it is higher locally too (38% vs. 32%). Poisoning, by contrast, is meaningfully less common here than across California (9% vs. 14%). Firearms are the mechanism used in 52% of male suicides, and suffocation in 37%. Among the smaller number of female decedents, suffocation is more common than firearms.

TCPH analysis of CDPH death registry data. TC residents. California: CDPH EpiCenter.



Suicide deaths in Tuolumne County don't spike around the holidays — the highest months are January and June, while August through October are consistently the lowest.

TCPH analysis of CDPH death registry data. TC residents.

67%
of Tuolumne County suicide deaths (2016–2025) occurred at home

Secure firearm storage at home is one of the most direct prevention opportunities available to families.

18%
of deaths among Tuolumne County residents ages 10–24 (2016–2025) were suicides

Second only to motor vehicle-related fatalities.

All Tuolumne County figures: TCPH analysis of CDPH death registry data, Tuolumne County residents. California comparisons: CDPH EpiCenter (California Injury Data Online), accessed September 2026.



The Power of Belonging

Connection and Belonging: Supporting Tuolumne County Youth

The numbers tell us that some young people in Tuolumne County are struggling. Recent local California Healthy Kids Survey data show concerning levels of persistent sadness and hopelessness among students. While these numbers help us understand the challenges youth are facing, they also highlight the importance of creating supportive environments where young people feel connected, valued, and that they belong.

For Rob Egger, Deputy County Superintendent with the Tuolumne County Superintendent of Schools (TCSOS), one factor stands out, ***“Belonging is one of the strongest protective factors for youth mental health.”***

That sense of belonging can be built in seemingly small ways: a teacher who notices when a student is having a difficult day, a classroom where kindness is practiced, friendships with peers, or an adult who makes time to listen.

Building Connection into the School Day

In recent years, TCSOS has expanded efforts to support the social and emotional well-being of students while also providing resources for the adults who surround them. The goal, Egger explains, isn't to give already-busy teachers another program to manage. Instead, tools are designed to complement the work educators are already doing and help bring social-emotional learning naturally into the classroom.

One example is the Gratitude Project, which provides teachers with books, journals, and activities that help incorporate gratitude into classroom routines. The annual Children's Friendship Conference introduces third graders to lessons about kindness, friendship, and healthy relationships, while similar efforts to strengthen connection extend across grade levels.

TCSOS has also been sharing resources that help students and educators better understand the pressures affecting youth mental health today.

TCSOS plans to provide free books to students and parents, including *The Amazing Generation: How to Raise Grounded Kids in the Age of Anxiety* and *The Anxious Generation*. Both explore how technology and increased screen time can affect mental health and may displace experiences that support healthy development, including face-to-face connection, play, independence, and time with family and friends. By bringing these conversations into schools, TCSOS is helping students and educators think more intentionally about the relationships and everyday experiences that build connection, resilience, and a sense of belonging.

Connecting Students to Help

Belonging is also about making sure young people know where to turn when they need more support.

Through [Accessing Wellness and Resilience in Education \(AWARE\)](#), TCSOS works with schools and community partners to connect students and families with mental health resources. The program serves students ages 4–22 and their families and provides services including case management, referrals, outreach to high-risk youth, and connections to additional mental health and community services.

For parents worried about their child, Egger encourages them to reach out. “Reach out to the teachers. They can observe throughout the day and may notice signs,” he said. Parents can also connect with school counselors, AWARE clinicians, or professional mental health services when needed.

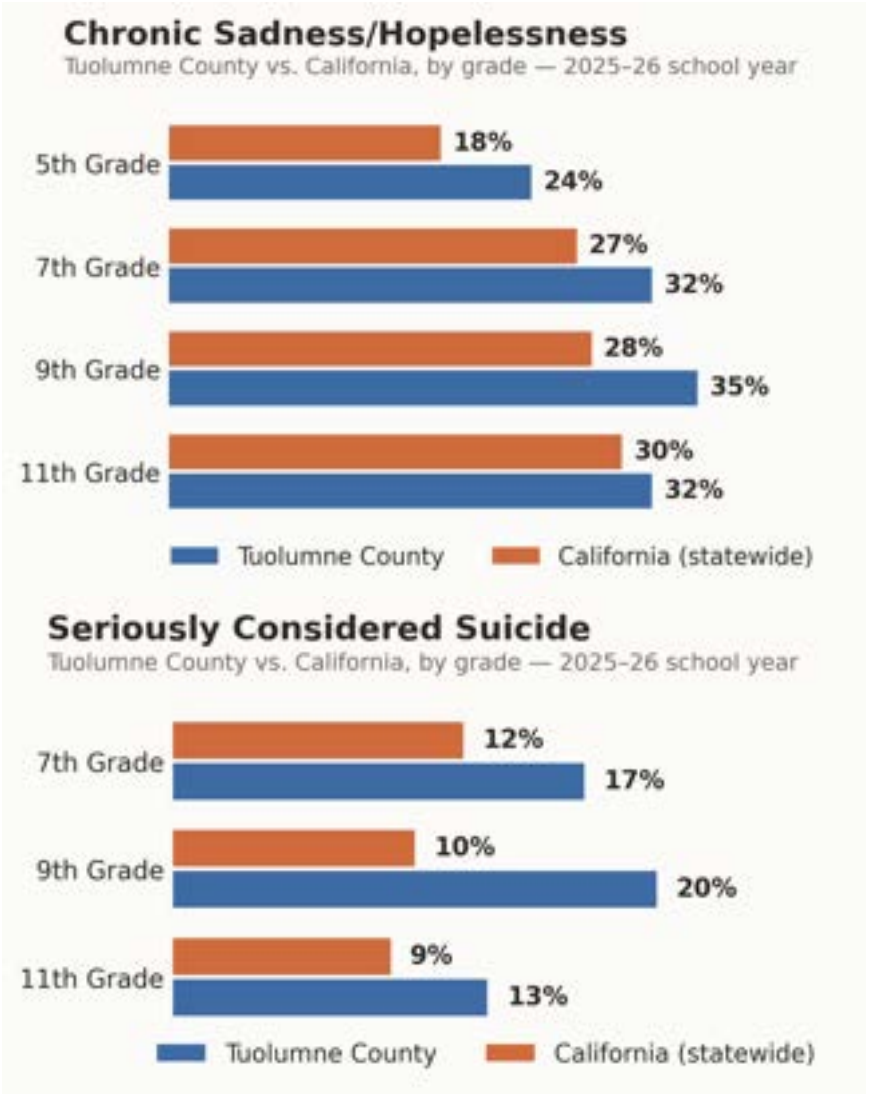
Teachers, counselors, parents, and others each see different pieces of a young person's life. Staying connected and sharing concerns can help build a stronger support network. Youth mental health is complex, but creating spaces where young people know they matter, have trusted adults to turn to, and feel they belong is an important place to start.

WHY BELONGING MATTERS

Suicide data can tell us about lives lost, but it cannot fully tell us how young people in our community are feeling. The [California Healthy Kids Survey \(CHKS\)](#) helps add another part of that picture by asking local students about their own experiences, including emotional well-being, connectedness, and thoughts of suicide.

Recent results show areas of concern. Local students report persistent sadness or hopelessness and serious thoughts of suicide at higher rates than students statewide across the grade levels surveyed. The difference is particularly notable among ninth graders: 20% reported seriously considering suicide, compared with 10% statewide. Locally, this measure has remained elevated since 2018.

The data tells another important story, too. Feeling connected to school, friends, family, trusted adults, and community can play an important role in supporting youth well-being. Local schools have increasingly focused on building that sense of belonging, and countywide school connectedness improved in 2025–26 after several years of concern. Together, these measures help us understand both the challenges young people face and the importance of creating places where they feel supported, valued, and connected.



35%
of Tuolumne County 9th graders report chronic sadness or hopelessness vs. 28% statewide · 2025–26 CHKS

County participants: 5th n=192, 7th n=368, 9th n=429, 11th n=317.

2x
Tuolumne County 9th graders are twice as likely to report seriously considering suicide
20% locally vs. 10% statewide · 2025–26 CHKS

ABOUT THIS DATA
Percent of survey respondents, not counts. Ideation is not asked in 5th grade.

California Healthy Kids Survey (CHKS), presented by the Tuolumne County Superintendent of Schools, 2025–26 administration (fielded January 2026); California comparison from the 2023–2025 statewide CHKS reports (Elementary Main Report for 5th grade; California School Climate, Health, and Learning Surveys for 7th/9th/11th). Survey self-report data — not comparable with the death-certificate figures elsewhere in this report.

Community CONNECTIONS



Local voices highlight the power of community collaboration in suicide prevention



LANTERN OF LIGHT



"We need to normalize suicide alertness. SafeTALK training should be taken just like we take CPR training. Both save lives."

Kim Garro, Lantern of Light

A Light Left On

How Lantern of Light uses faith, connection, and education to strengthen suicide prevention in Tuolumne County

Some conversations can feel especially difficult to begin. Suicide is one of them. We pause with uncertainty. We search for the right words. Sometimes, we may say nothing at all for fear of saying the wrong thing.

For more than a decade, Cynthia Halman has worked to change this perception by helping people become more comfortable recognizing signs of suicide, asking directly, and staying present during someone's moment of crisis. Halman began teaching ASIST in 2010 and safeTALK in 2013. In 2019, Kim Garro joined her in establishing Lantern of Light, a faith-based nonprofit suicide prevention ministry focused on reducing stigma and building suicide-alert communities.

Lantern of Light's tools include safeTALK and Talk Saves Lives, evidence-based trainings designed to help everyday people recognize when someone may be struggling with thoughts of suicide and know what to do next. The idea behind the work is that suicide prevention does not belong exclusively in a clinical setting. It can begin anywhere people know one another well enough to notice when something has changed.

What distinguishes Lantern of Light is the role spirituality plays in how they approach suicide prevention work. Lantern of Light's Christian faith-focus provides a foundation centered on hope, relationships, and the value of human connection. Their mission speaks of helping bring people from the darkness of suicide into the light of God's love and hope. Faith communities offer one natural setting for this work, bringing people together during periods of celebration, transition, grief, and hardship. However, Lantern of Light's reach is not limited to religious spaces. They also provide suicide prevention training and education in secular and nonreligious settings, bringing practical skills around suicide alertness and intervention to the broader community. The goal is to normalize these trainings in various settings and to help more people become comfortable recognizing when someone may be struggling and prepared to respond.

At the center of Lantern of Light's approach is connection. Someone notices a loved one struggling and asks the uncomfortable question. They listen, stay present, and importantly, they know how to help connect that person with additional support. Since Lantern of Light was established in 2019, the organization reports reaching more than 1,000 people with suicide prevention information, providing bereavement support to more than 100 people, and assisting with more than 200 suicide interventions. Its faith-community work has included training more than 300 people across more than 20 churches, building suicide prevention knowledge within communities where people already gather and form relationships.

In suicide prevention, we often talk about systems, services, and interventions, and all of them matter. Lantern of Light's work highlights another part of that system: the people and organizations already embedded in a community. Prevention can begin in workplaces, community organizations, faith communities, homes, and everyday conversations, often before someone reaches a clinical or crisis setting.

For Lantern of Light, faith provides the lens, but the practical message extends beyond any particular belief system: anyone can recognize the signs regardless of faith, be willing to ask the question, and know how to connect someone with help. Their work demonstrates how faith-based organizations can occupy a distinct place within a larger community prevention network, bringing their own traditions and relationships to the work while contributing to a shared, community-wide approach to suicide prevention.

For more information about Lantern of Light:

Website: <https://lanternoflight.org/>

Call: (209) 559-0840 E-mail: lanternoflight365@gmail.com

A Place to Belong

How CalPride Sierras builds connection, visibility, and belonging as a suicide prevention strategy in rural Tuolumne County

Some of the most important suicide prevention happens long before a crisis.

Sometimes, it looks like a social event. A Pride celebration. A table with health information. A conversation with a peer. A room where someone can walk in and simply be themselves. For CalPride Sierras, creating those spaces is an integral part of their work.

CalPride Sierras serves the rural LGBTQ+ community through social events, health information and testing, peer support, advocacy, resources, and community events like Sonora Pride. Each activity may serve a different purpose, but together they address something fundamental to suicide prevention: isolation.

Growing up LGBTQ+ in a rural community can be difficult. There may be fewer visible LGBTQ+ spaces, fewer opportunities to meet people with shared experiences, and greater uncertainty about where it feels safe or comfortable to be open and authentic. For young people in particular, CalPride Sierras sees the reality of suicide within the LGBTQ+ community as something that cannot be separated from experiences of isolation, acceptance, and belonging.

“The most important thing we do is connect people and foster everyday joy.”

Morgan, CalPride Sierras

That makes visibility more than symbolic.

Visibility is, in many ways, the opposite of isolation. A Pride flag in a window, a community event, or simply seeing other LGBTQ+ people living openly in the same small town sends a simple but important message: you are not the only one here. And that visibility matters across generations. For some LGBTQ+ adults, growing up did not include Pride celebrations, openly queer role models, or spaces where they felt safe being themselves.

Creating those opportunities now can offer something they may not have experienced when they were younger: a chance to build community, participate openly, and even heal some of the isolation carried forward from an earlier time. CalPride Sierras sees that healing and connection as part of suicide prevention, too.

CALPRIDE SIERRAS



For more information about CalPride Sierras:

<https://calpride.org/sierras/>

Call: (209) 288-2357

Address: 134 N Washington Street Suite 3
Sonora, CA 95370

 Instagram: [@calpridesierras](https://www.instagram.com/calpridesierras)

TREVOR PROJECT

The Trevor Project provides free, confidential crisis support and suicide prevention services for LGBTQ+ young people. Trained counselors are available 24/7 by phone, text, and chat to offer a safe, supportive space for youth who need help. Text START to 678-678. or call 866-488-7386

CalPride Sierras turns visibility into relationships. Social gatherings allow people to meet. Peer support creates space to talk. Health information and testing connect people with resources that improve long-term health outcomes. Social events work toward fostering a community where LGBTQ+ people can participate more openly and safely.

Through the lens of suicide prevention, all of it matters.

Public health often talks about protective factors: the relationships, environments, skills, and resources that can help reduce vulnerability to suicide. Social connection and a sense of belonging are part of that picture. CalPride Sierras works on those factors well before someone reaches a moment of crisis. The goal is not simply to respond when someone is struggling, but to build a community in which fewer people have to struggle alone. That work has taken on added urgency during a period CalPride Sierras describes as uncertain for LGBTQ+ people. They have seen an increase in young community members choosing to leave the area, reinforcing the importance of maintaining visible, supportive spaces for those who remain.

That sense of connection carries particular weight in a rural community.



For many people, this rural community is simply home. Their families, friends, careers, histories, and lives are here. Yet finding LGBTQ+ community and resources locally can be more difficult. CalPride Sierras' work is rooted in the idea that people should not have to leave home to find belonging. Instead, they can actively participate in what their community becomes, building resources, advocating for change, and helping ensure services, including suicide prevention, are available to those who need them.

Building that kind of community takes time, and the work can also be demanding for those providing support. Peer supporters may find themselves alongside friends and community members during deeply difficult moments. CalPride Sierras sees a need for greater support for people filling those roles, recognizing that those who regularly support others, especially in suicide prevention, also need opportunities to process, recharge, and receive support themselves.

There is no single event, resource, or program that eliminates suicide risk. Prevention is incremental work: relationships formed one at a time, visibility that grows over years, and spaces that become more welcoming.

For CalPride Sierras, that is what makes seemingly simple acts of connection part of suicide prevention. Bringing people together cannot solve every challenge facing rural LGBTQ+ communities, but it can reduce isolation, strengthen support networks, increase access to resources, and create more opportunities for people to participate in their community as themselves.

The concept is simple: connection matters. Suicide prevention can begin long before a crisis, by creating the conditions for people to feel seen, supported, and part of the place they call home.



HOPE & HONOR WALK



Turning Loss into Action

The story behind the Hope and Honor Walk and growing movement for suicide prevention in Tuolumne County

Grief does not come with instructions.

For Serena Orman, losing her mother to suicide in 2014 meant navigating not only the loss itself, but everything that followed, the questions, the grief, and systems that can feel particularly difficult to navigate when a family is already overwhelmed. She also came to understand something that would shape her work in the years ahead: the impact of a suicide does not end with the person who dies. It moves outward, affecting families, friends, and entire communities.

At the time, Serena did not have a blueprint for what came next. "I don't know what to do, but I have to do something." That something eventually became the Hope and Honor Walk.

Serena became involved with local prevention efforts and organizations, including the YES Partnership, and in 2019 the first Hope and Honor Walk brought community members together to remember those lost to suicide while connecting people with resources and support. What began from a deeply personal experience of loss grew into an annual community event, a place where grief could be acknowledged, prevention resources could be shared, and conversations about suicide could happen in the open.

Those conversations matter because stigma remains one of the barriers Serena consistently sees. People may be afraid to talk about suicidal thoughts, reluctant to seek help, or uncertain about how others will respond. People grieving a suicide loss can experience their own isolation, carrying a story that may be difficult to share with those who have not experienced it. The walk creates space for both.

For some, that means finally talking about a loss carried quietly for years. Serena remembers one person who attended the walk and opened up about a suicide loss he had carried for 14 years, beginning a process of talking about and working through his grief. For others, the connection can happen while they are still struggling themselves. [A participant in the 2025 Hope and Honor Walk later told the Union Democrat](#) that he had been experiencing suicidal thoughts when he attended. Being around others who understood what he was experiencing helped him feel less alone and recognize that he needed help. A year later, he returned to the event and shared his experience publicly.

Stories like these demonstrate the two sides of Hope and Honor: remembering those who have died while working to prevent future loss. "Even if I save one life a year, I've met my goal," Serena said.

What began locally has also grown into broader advocacy. Serena has become involved with the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, taking her experience from Tuolumne County to advocacy efforts in Sacramento and Washington, D.C. The same impulse that began with wanting to do something after a personal loss now includes advocating for policies, resources, and greater attention to suicide prevention. Back home, Serena has also seen progress in how Tuolumne County approaches the issue. The development of the Tuolumne County Suicide Prevention Collaborative has brought organizations together around shared goals, creating greater communication and a more collaborative approach to prevention. Rather than individual organizations carrying pieces of the work separately, the collaborative provides an opportunity to share responsibility, resources, and perspectives.

There is still more work ahead. Local data gaps can make it difficult to fully understand who is being affected and where prevention resources are most needed. Continued advocacy is necessary, as is making sure people know how to access the resources already available. One of the most important is 988, the Suicide & Crisis Lifeline. Available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 988 is not only for someone at the point of immediate suicide risk. People can call, text, or chat when they are struggling, worried about someone else, or simply need someone to talk to. Making that number as familiar as other emergency resources is an important part of building a community that knows where to turn. Serena also encourages people to participate in suicide prevention before a crisis occurs: attend a suicide-alertness training, support local prevention organizations, learn the warning signs, share 988, and become more comfortable talking openly about suicide. A curious and open-minded outlook improves connection and reduces stigma.

Nearly a decade after deciding she simply had to do something, Serena's response to personal loss has become part of a much larger community effort. The Hope and Honor Walk is one day each year, but the work surrounding it continues daily through advocacy, training, collaboration, conversations, and connections between people.

And beneath all of it is the message Serena continues to carry forward: there is always hope.

For more information about the Hope and Honor Walk:

<https://www.facebook.com/suicidepreventionandawareness4all/>

E-mail: hopeandhonorwalk@gmail.com



**“Even if I save
one life a year,
I’ve met my
goal.”**

Serena, Hope & Honor Walk

OUT OF THE DARKNESS WALK

A Campus Steps Forward

Columbia College creates space for remembrance, connection, and conversations about suicide prevention

by Jordan McMurray, Columbia College Student Health & Wellness Center

In April 2026, Columbia College Student Health & Wellness partnered with The American Foundation for Suicide Prevention and Stand Up, Speak Up, Speak Out in hosting our first Out of the Darkness Campus Walk. The event created a welcoming space for participants to come together in support of suicide prevention while learning about the mental health resources and services available both on campus and within our community.

We raised \$10,550, 125 people were registered, 18 teams were created and 17 community partners participated. This was a meaningful and impactful event designed to bring students, staff and faculty, and community members together to raise awareness, reduce stigma, promote connection, and highlight the importance of mental health and suicide prevention.

A major highlight of the event was the participation of our two inspiring guest speakers Krysta Wolken and Andrea Victoria Lisbon. They shared powerful and personal messages related to mental health, resilience, suicide prevention, and hope. Following the speakers, participants took part in a variety of activities including the honoring bead ceremony, the campus walk and creating signs for loved ones or in support of mental health. The walk provided an opportunity for participants to walk in memory of loved ones, in support of those currently struggling, for themselves, and as a symbol of hope for those who need support in the future.

Moving forward, Columbia College continues to build a strong foundation by expanding student involvement, strengthening community partnerships, increasing awareness of available resources, and incorporating additional opportunities for education and connection.

We are extremely thankful for everyone who participated, showed up, and provided support.



For more information about the Columbia College Student Health & Wellness Center visit:

https://gocolumbia.edu/health_services/index.html

Call: 209-588-5204



COLUMBIA
COLLEGE



YES PARTNERSHIP



“Because sometimes a person is telling us they are struggling in the only way they know how. The more of us who know how to hear those invitations, the stronger that safety net becomes.”

Bob, YES Partnership



For more information about the YES Partnership:

<https://www.yespartnership.net/>

or email Bob White:
rwhite@atcaa.org

Because You Matter

Building a suicide-alert community where everyone has a role in prevention

Sometimes the first sign that someone is struggling does not sound like a request for help.

It might be a change in behavior. An offhand comment. Someone withdrawing or saying something that makes you wonder, “*Is there more to this?*”

In suicide prevention training, these moments are sometimes called *invitations*, which are ways a person may signal that they are struggling or test whether it feels safe to say more. The challenge is noticing and knowing how to respond.

For Bob White, YES Partnership Director and longtime Tuolumne County suicide prevention trainer, this is why **connection sits at the center of suicide prevention**. When we connect with and listen to the people around us, we are more likely to notice when something changes, and when we know what to do next, an uncertain moment can become an opportunity to ask an important question.

Bob has been doing this work since 2012, helping foster resiliency and expand suicide prevention training throughout Tuolumne County. Through the YES Partnership and Adventist Health Sonora, community members and professionals can participate in free ASIST, safeTALK, Mental Health First Aid, and Youth Mental Health First Aid trainings. The goal goes beyond training individuals. It is to build a suicide-alert community, one where people recognize possible signs of suicide, feel comfortable asking about them directly, listen without judgment, and connect them with support.

Everyone has a role in a suicide-alert community.

You do not need to be a counselor or crisis professional to help. Friends, coworkers, teachers, parents, coaches, and neighbors can all notice when something has changed and reach out.

safeTALK, a suicide prevention training offered year round Tuolumne County, organizes that response into four actions: *Tell, Ask, Listen, and KeepSafe*. “Tell” begins with recognizing invitations, which can look different for every person. “Ask” means being willing to ask directly about suicide. “Listen” means giving someone room to talk without judging, fixing, or dismissing what they are saying. “KeepSafe” means taking practical steps to help someone through the immediate crisis and connect them with additional support.

These actions can be especially important during a suicidal crisis and may differ throughout the crisis phase. Prioritizing time to connect and providing opportunities to receive help can matter immensely.

In practice, this might mean recognizing an invitation and asking the tough question, “are you considering suicide?” It might mean helping the person in crisis call or text a crisis line. It might mean creating barriers between the person in crisis and potentially lethal means, including medications and firearms. No one must endure this struggle alone. Family, friends, professionals, crisis services, and community organizations can each provide another layer of support. *(continued on next page)*

Because You Matter

continued

For Bob, listening is a critical part of that response. Someone experiencing a mental health crisis may carry tremendous shame about what they are thinking or feeling. When they reach out, they may not need the perfect words or advice. They need to know they can speak honestly and be heard without judgment. This reflects Bob's guiding philosophy: **"We all matter."**

This belief extends beyond the immediate crisis. Safety planning and connecting someone with support are important, but so is what happens next: checking in, staying connected, and reminding the person in crisis that they matter.

This approach reflects the YES Partnership's long history in Tuolumne County. Established in 1986 in response to several local teenage suicides, the coalition has spent decades bringing together youth, families, schools, agencies, and community members to strengthen resiliency and reduce risks facing young people. Community members can join that work by attending a suicide prevention training or YES Partnership meeting, participating in community awareness events, learning the warning signs, sharing crisis resources, becoming more comfortable asking about suicide, and listening to the answer.

A suicide-alert community is not a single program or organization. It is a network of people prepared to notice, ask, listen, and respond when it matters most. Sometimes a person is telling us they are struggling in the only way they know how. The more of us who recognize and respond to those invitations, the stronger our community safety net becomes.

TUOLUMNE COUNTY SUICIDE PREVENTION COLLABORATIVE



The Tuolumne County Suicide Prevention Collaborative brings local partners together around a shared goal: preventing suicide and strengthening support across our rural community.

Convened by Tuolumne County Behavioral Health with support from Public Health, the Collaborative connects service providers, healthcare systems, nonprofits, and community organizations to coordinate events, share data, resources, and strategies.

By working together, partners build on one another's strengths and expand the reach of suicide prevention trainings, peer support, resources, and outreach throughout Tuolumne County.

Are you an organization interested in joining the collaborative?

Contact LLujan@co.tuolumne.ca.us.



WOUNDED WARRIOR PROJECT

Service members make significant commitments and sacrifices in service to our country. For some veterans, the transition to civilian life can bring challenges, from finding meaningful employment and navigating benefits to reconnecting with family and community or addressing the lasting effects of military service.

Suicide remains an important public health concern among veterans. In 2023, 6,398 veterans died by suicide: an average of 17.5 each day. Notably, 61% had not received Veterans Health Administration care in the year of or year before their death, highlighting the importance of reaching veterans both within and beyond traditional health care settings.

Wounded Warrior Project (WWP) provides veterans and their families with another avenue for support through programs addressing mental, physical, social, and financial well-being. Services include mental health support, peer connection, career assistance, benefits guidance, and physical wellness programs at no cost to registered warriors and their families.

Programs like these can strengthen the broader network of support around veterans by helping people connect with resources, navigate challenges, and build connections before they reach a crisis.

More information visit:
<https://www.woundedwarriorproject.org/>



Kris Albrecht, USCG, Retired
Veterans Services Officer

As the County Veterans Service Officer, I believe suicide prevention must remain a shared responsibility within our community. Veterans have served our country and faced challenges that many of us may never fully understand. No Veteran should feel that they have to face those challenges alone.

Suicide prevention begins with connection with connection, which is best when established before a crisis. When a person starts struggling, this connection is imperative to help recognize the struggle, reach out, listen without judgment, and help veterans and their families with the resources and support they need.

Our commitment is simple: every Veteran matters, every Veteran deserves support, and help is always available.



The **Tuolumne County Veterans Service Office** helps veterans, their dependents, and survivors navigate and access federal, state, and local benefits.

Services are free and include:

- Assistance with VA claims and appeals
- Disability compensation, pensions, healthcare enrollment, military records, burial benefits, education benefits
- Referrals
- Transportation support for appointments

Now at a new, more accessible location:

950 S. Washington Street, Sonora
209-533-6280
Monday–Friday, 9 a.m.–12 p.m. & 1–4 p.m.



**Veterans
Crisis Line**

DIAL 988 then PRESS 1

988

SUICIDE & CRISIS LIFELINE



HELP IS AVAILABLE

The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline provides confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress **24 hours a day, 7 days a week**, across the United States.

9-8-8 is available via call or text, and online chat.

What Is 988?

The 988 lifeline provides a safe place to call, text, or message when life begins to be too much. Whether you are facing mental health struggles, emotional distress, alcohol or drug use concerns, worried about a friend, or just need someone to talk to, 988 connects you to a professional counselor and guides individuals in the right direction to the resources they need.

Examples of when you can call or text 988:

Maybe today has been difficult.

You're depressed or anxious, even if not in a crisis.

You're having thoughts of suicide.

You need someone to talk to.

You're worried about your friend's mental health.

You're feeling out of control or overwhelmed by emotions.

You're worried about your mental health.

Maybe you feel hopeless, sad, or worthless.

You think someone might be experiencing thoughts of suicide.



HOW TO START THE CONVERSATION

Recognizing the signs that someone may be struggling and reaching out can make a meaningful difference. You don't need to have all the answers. Start by asking, listening without judgment, and helping the person connect with support.

Know the Warning Signs

Someone may need additional support if they:

- Talk about wanting to die or having no reason to live
- Express hopelessness, unbearable pain, or feeling trapped
- Talk about feeling like a burden to others
- Look for ways to harm or kill themselves
- Increase their use of alcohol or drugs
- Become unusually anxious, agitated, reckless, or angry
- Sleep much more or less than usual
- Withdraw from friends, family, or activities
- Experience significant or extreme changes in mood



What You Can Do

If you're concerned about someone, don't be afraid to reach out. Be direct, listen without judgment, and take their concerns seriously.

Ask. Check in and ask directly if they are thinking about suicide. Be ok with the awkwardness.

Be there. Listen and give them space to talk without trying to immediately solve the problem. Avoid minimizing their feelings or arguing with them that their life is worth living.

Help keep them safe. If there is an immediate risk, stay with them, call 988 or 911, stay with them, and help reduce access to things they could use to hurt themselves.

Help them connect. Connect them with a trusted person, mental health professional, or crisis support. Help keep the environment safe and limit access to lethal means when possible.

Follow up. Check in again. Continued connection and support matter.

Not Sure What to Say?

"You haven't seemed like yourself lately. How are you doing?"

"I've noticed you've been having a hard time. Do you want to talk about it?"

"You don't have to go through this alone. I'm here to listen."

"I care about you, and I want to ask directly: Are you thinking about suicide?"

"Seems like something is up? Do you want to talk?"

"I know you're going through some stuff. I'm here for you."

My Support Map

We all need connection. Take a moment to think about the people, places, activities, and resources that help you feel supported. Write down what comes to mind and you can return to this page whenever you need a reminder.



PEOPLE I CAN REACH OUT TO

*Who helps me feel heard,
understood, or less alone?*



PLACES I FEEL CONNECTED

*Where do I feel comfortable,
welcome, safe, or like I belong?*

ME

*Connection looks
different for everyone.
What does it look like
for you?*



THINGS THAT HELP ME RESET

*What helps when I'm stressed,
overwhelmed, or having a
difficult day? examples: walking,
music, being outside, creating,
movement, etc*



SUPPORT I CAN TURN TO

*What professional or community
resource could I contact if I need
more support?*

WHEN I AM NOTICING I'M HAVING A HARD TIME...

One small things I can do is:

One person I can connect with is:

NEED SUPPORT NOW?

*Call or text **988** to connect with the 988
Suicide & Crisis Line. If there is an immediate
life-threatening emergency, call **911***

FROM SILENCE TO SUPPORT

How reducing stigma can make it easier to ask for help



Stigma can make an already difficult experience even harder. Negative beliefs, judgment, or misunderstanding around mental health and suicide can leave people feeling ashamed, isolated, or afraid to talk about what they are experiencing.

Stigma can come from many places: from misconceptions about mental illness to the language we use and the way mental health and suicide are portrayed. It can also become internalized, causing someone to feel shame about their own experiences or believe they should handle their struggles alone.

Fear of being judged can become a barrier to asking for help. When people feel they cannot safely talk about depression, suicidal thoughts, or other mental health concerns, they may be less likely to reach out to family, friends, healthcare providers, or other sources of support.

Reducing stigma starts with making these conversations more normal. We can listen without judgment, use respectful language, challenge misconceptions, and remind people that seeking support is a sign of taking care of their health.

Talking openly and compassionately about mental health and suicide helps create a community where people feel safe saying “I’m struggling” and where asking for help is met with support.

Information adapted from the American Association of Suicidology and NIH

KNOW THE SIGNS

Recognizing when someone may need support

Changes in what someone says, does, or feels may signal that they are struggling especially when the behavior is new, has increased, or follows a painful event, loss, or major change. These signs can be different for each person.

What They May Say

- Talking about ending their lives
- Feeling hopeless or having no reason to live
- Feeling trapped or in unbearable pain
- Feeling like a burden to others

What You May Notice

- Withdrawing from family, friends, or activities
- Increased use of alcohol or drugs
- Sleeping much more or less than usual
- Acting anxious, agitated, or unusually reckless
- Extreme changes in mood
- Giving away valued possessions or saying goodbye
- Looking for or making plans for a way to die
- Missing work or school

Mood

- Depressed
- Lack of emotion
- Rage
- Irritability
- Impulsivity
- Anxiety
- Sudden, unexplained happiness

Trust your concern. If something seems different, reach out and ask how they are doing. If you are concerned about suicide, it is okay to ask directly: “Are you thinking about suicide?”



Learn more by visiting the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention:
<https://afsp.org/when-someone-is-at-risk/>

TUOLUMNE COUNTY RESOURCES & SUPPORT FOR SUICIDE & CRISIS

Hotlines & Support Groups

Tuolumne County Suicide Prevention 24/7 Hotline

209-533-7000 or (800) 630-1130

Tuolumne County Crisis Intervention Program

105 Hospital Rd. Sonoma, CA Walk-in 8 a.m. - 7 p.m.

Website: <https://www.tuolumnecounty.ca.gov/220/Behavioral-Health>

Support Group for Survivors of Suicide Loss

2nd Tuesday of each month

209-559-0332 or 209-532-1328

Survivors of Suicide Loss Bereavement Counseling

209-559-0840 or 209-559-0332

Center for a Non Violent Community 24/7 Violence Hotline

(209) 533-3401

Website: <https://nonviolentcommunity.org/>

Community Trainings and Coalitions

Hope and Honor Walk

Website: <https://www.facebook.com/suicidepreventionandawareness4all/>

YES Partnership Coalition

Community-wide coalition dedicated to support Tuolumne County youth and families by preventing suicide, substance use and child abuse.

Website: <https://www.yespartnership.net/>

Lantern of Light

Faith-based suicide prevention

Website: <https://lanternoflight.org/trainings/>

safeTALK & ASIST Trainings

Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training & alertness skills for community members

209-533-1397 X226

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES FOR SUICIDE & CRISIS SUPPORT



800-852-8336
Teen Line

800-843-5200
CA Youth Crisis Line



Text 838255
Veterans Crisis Line

877-565-8860
Trans Lifeline



1-866-488-7386
Trevor Project

1-800-944-4773
*Postpartum Support
International*



1-800-656-HOPE
*RAINN National Sexual
Assault Hotline*

1-800-950-6264
NAMI Helpline



If you or someone you
know is having thoughts of
suicide, call the National
Suicide Prevention Lifeline.
Dial 9-8-8



**Veterans
Crisis Line**
DIAL 988 then **PRESS 1**

For emergencies call 9-1-1

SUICIDE PREVENTION

TUOLUMNE COUNTY | DATA REPORT | 2026



**TUOLUMNE COUNTY
PUBLIC HEALTH**

PREVENT • PROMOTE • PROTECT

CONTACT US

20111 Cedar Road North, Sonora, CA 95370

(209) 533-7401

health@tuolumnecounty.ca.gov

<https://www.tuolumnecounty.ca.gov/250/Public-Health#>