

Helping Hospitals Prevent Repeat Youth Suicide Attempts

Statement of Problem

Suicide is the third leading cause of death for U.S. adolescents, and suicide rates are constantly rising. One in ten high school students report having attempted suicide, and medical hospitalizations following youth suicide attempts have doubled in the past decade. Despite the fact that 60,000 youth are hospitalized for suicide attempt each year and that many youth attempt suicide multiple times, many medical hospital teams do not adequately ensure that youth who are discharged receive continuing mental health care. Attending a mental health follow-up visit after hospitalization is associated with as much as 75% lower risk of subsequent suicide attempt. To help hospitals prevent suicide among children and adolescents, there is a critical need to develop tools to disseminate best practices for mental health care after discharge from a suicide attempt.

Description

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Image



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After evaluating these strategies, we will develop a toolkit that hospitals can use to reduce and prevent repeat suicide attempts among hospitalized youth.

The study aims to identify which suicide prevention practices are effective for young people hospitalized for a suicide attempt. Throughout the course of the project, we will develop and test strategies for implementing effective suicide prevention practices in children's hospitals.

First, we will seek to collect information on existing practices and determine best practices for suicide prevention. Using a national sample of Medicaid claims and survey data, we will determine which hospital and community structures, such as the physical infrastructure and personnel embedded in the system, are associated with higher and lower rates of patient attendance at mental health follow-up visits among youth hospitalized for suicide.

Next, we will develop a toolkit that hospitals can use to reduce and prevent repeat suicide attempt among hospitalized youth. Along with an extensive literature review and qualitative interviews with hospital staff, we will use the information garnered from the first portion of this study to develop a youth suicide prevention toolkit. We're designing this resource to help inpatient medical units select and implement processes for safety planning and ensuring continuity of mental health care for youth at risk of suicide.

Finally, we will test the toolkit and evaluate its efficacy in our health system.

Next Steps

Once we develop the toolkit, we will conduct a pilot test in hospital inpatient units to determine how feasible the toolkit is to use and whether the toolkit is effective at improving clinical outcomes for youth. We will also use this study to develop methods for a future fully powered trial of the toolkit, with the ultimate goal of optimizing it for use at hospitals nationwide.

This project page was last updated in September 2019.

Suggested Citation

Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, PolicyLab. *Helping Hospitals Prevent Repeat Youth Suicide Attempts* [online]. Available at: <http://www.policylab.chop.edu>. [Accessed: plug in date accessed here].



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Related Tools & Publications

- [Examining Hospitals' Role in Preventing Youth Suicide](#)
[Blog Post](#)
Sep 10, 2018
- [Integrating Behavioral Health Services Into Medical Hospital Care for Children](#)
[Policy Briefs](#)
Feb 2019
- [Association of Extending Hospital Length of Stay With Reduced Pediatric Hospital Readmissions](#)
[Article](#)
Feb 2019
- [Catching up to the Crisis: Opportunities for Pediatric Hospitals to Improve Children's Access to Mental Health Services](#)
[Article](#)
Feb 2019
- [Trends in Pediatric Emergency Department Visits for Mental Health Conditions and Disposition by Presence of a Psychiatric Unit](#)
[Article](#)
Jun 2019
- [Behavioral Health: A Snapshot of a PolicyLab Research Portfolio](#)
[Tools and Memos](#)
Aug 2025
- [Association of Suicide Prevention Interventions With Subsequent Suicide Attempts, Linkage to Follow-up Care and Depression Symptoms for Acute Care Settings](#)
[Article](#)
Jun 2020
- [Mental Health Service Use Before and After a Suicidal Crisis Among Children and Adolescents in a U.S. National Medicaid Sample](#)
[Article](#)
May 2021
- [Treating Pediatric and Geriatric Patients at Risk of Suicide in General Emergency Departments: Perspectives From Emergency Department Clinical Leaders](#)
[Article](#)
Jul 2021
- [Pediatric Emergency Departments' Readiness for Change Toward Improving Suicide Prevention: A Mixed-methods Study with U.S. Leaders](#)
[Article](#)
Oct 2022
- ["Treat Them Like a Human Being...They are Somebody's Somebody": Providers' Perspectives on Treating Patients in the Emergency Department After Self-injurious Behavior](#)
[Article](#)
Feb 2023

Related Projects

[Mental Health Conditions Among Hospitalized Children](#)

[Behavioral Health](#)