YOUTH SUICIDE  Risk Factors

MONTANA CURRENTLY LEADS THE NATION IN RATES OF SUICIDE

Family Risk Factors
- Family history of suicide (especially a parent)
- Changes in family structure (death, divorce, remarriage, etc)
- Family involvement in alcoholism
- Lack of strong bonding/attachment within family, withdrawal of support
- Unrealistic parental expectations
- Violent, destructive parent-child interactions
- Inconsistent, unpredictable parental behavior
- Depressed, suicidal parents
- Physical, emotional, or sexual abuse

Environmental Risk Factors
- Access to lethal means
- Frequent mobility
- Religious conflicts
- Social isolation/alienation or turmoil
- Exposure to suicide of a peer
- Anniversary of someone else’s suicide
- Incarceration or loss of freedom
- High levels of stress and pressure to succeed
- Over-exposure to violence in mass media

Behavioral Risk Factors
- One or more prior suicide attempt(s)
- Alcohol or drug abuse
- Aggression/rage/defiance
- Running away
- School failure/truancy
- Fascination with death, violence, Satanism

Personal Risk Factors
- Mental illness/conditions (Depression, Bipolar, Conduct and Anxiety Disorders)
- Poor impulse control
- Confusion/conflict about sexual identity
- Loss of significant relationships
- Compulsive, extreme perfectionism
- Difficulty managing decision-making, conflict, anger, problem-solving, etc.
- Loss (or perceived loss) of identity/status
- Feeling powerless, hopeless, helpless
- Victim of sexual abuse
- Pregnancy or fear of pregnancy
- Fear of humiliation

Montana Strategic Suicide Prevention Plan - Updated November, 2014  (Maine Youth Suicide Prevention Program, 2006; Montana Strategic Suicide Prevention Plan Work Group, 2008)
Protective Factors can be defined as characteristics associated with a lower likelihood of negative outcomes or that reduce a risk factor’s impact. Protective factors may be seen as positive countering events.

(SAMHSA, 2017)

Protective factors for all ages:
- Availability of physical and mental health care
- Restrictions on lethal means of suicide
- Safe and supportive school and community environments
- Sources of continued care after psychiatric hospitalization
- Connectedness to individuals, family, community, and social institutions.
- Supportive relationships with healthcare providers.
- Coping and problem solving skills
- Reasons for living (e.g., children in the home)
- Moral objections to suicide

Protective factors identified specifically for youth:
- Dominant attitudes, values, and norms prohibiting suicide, including strong beliefs about the meaning and value of life
- Life skills (i.e. decision-making, problem-solving, anger management, conflict management, and social skills)
- Good health, access to health care
- Best friends, supportive significant others
- Religious/spiritual beliefs
- A healthy fear of risky behavior, pain
- Hope for the future
- Sobriety
- Medical compliance
- Good impulse control
- Strong sense of self-worth
- A sense of personal control
- Strong interpersonal bonds, particularly with family and other caring adults
- Participation in or contribution to school or community projects/activities
- A reasonably safe, stable environment
- Difficult access to lethal means
- Responsibilities/duties to others
- Pets

Montana Strategic Suicide Prevention Plan - Updated November, 2014
(Maine Youth Suicide Prevention Program, 2006; Montana Strategic Suicide Prevention Plan Work Group, 2008)