



## Transforming Systems for Safer Care

Suicide deaths for individuals at risk of suicide in health and behavioral health systems are preventable. For systems dedicated to improving patient care and outcomes, the Zero Suicide framework presents both an aspirational challenge and a way forward.

### Zero Suicide Framework

People who die by suicide are often seen within the healthcare system before their deaths. Of those who die by suicide, 83% have seen a healthcare provider in the year before their death.<sup>1</sup> Only 19% of those who died in the past year were seen in outpatient behavioral health.<sup>2</sup>

Across healthcare disciplines and settings, there are many opportunities to identify and provide care to those at risk for suicide. To achieve this, suicide prevention must be seen as a core responsibility of healthcare.

The Zero Suicide framework is defined by a system-wide, organizational commitment to safer suicide care in health and behavioral healthcare systems.

It represents a culture shift from fragmented suicide care toward a holistic and comprehensive approach to quality improvement and patient safety—the most fundamental responsibility of healthcare—and to the safety and support of staff, who do the demanding work of caring for suicidal individuals.

### Elements of Zero Suicide

- 1** Lead system-wide culture change committed to reducing suicides
- 2** Train a competent, confident, and caring workforce
- 3** Identify individuals with suicide risk via comprehensive screening and assessment
- 4** Engage all individuals at-risk of suicide using a suicide care management plan
- 5** Treat suicidal thoughts and behaviors using evidence-based treatments
- 6** Transition individuals through care with warm hand-offs and supportive contacts
- 7** Improve policies and procedures through continuous quality improvement



## Zero Suicide Results

Zero Suicide fills the gaps that individuals at risk for suicide often fall through using evidence-based tools, systematic practices, training, and embedded workflows. Continuous process improvement drives this framework to ensure organizations deliver quality care, routinely examine outcomes, and remain committed to fidelity. The Zero Suicide approach builds on successes supported by data in healthcare organizations.

Since 2012, hundreds of healthcare systems across the U.S. and the globe have implemented Zero Suicide. They have reported reductions in suicides, decreases in hospitalizations, fewer inpatient psychiatric hospital readmissions, improvements in screening rates, cost savings, and more.

 [Download the Zero Suicide Results one-pager](#)




It is critically important to design for zero even when it may not be theoretically possible. When you design for zero, you surface different ideas and approaches that if you're only designing for 90 percent may not materialize. It is about purposefully aiming for a higher level of performance.

— Thomas Priselac, former CEO  
Cedars Sinai Medical Center

## Visit the Zero Suicide Toolkit

To assist health systems in their adoption of the Zero Suicide framework, Education Development Center (EDC) offers a publicly available and evolving online toolkit that includes resources to address each of the elements of Zero Suicide. Since 2014, the Zero Suicide Toolkit has supported systems taking on the challenge of Zero Suicide.

 [zerosuicide.edc.org](https://zerosuicide.edc.org)



## For more information, contact us at:

 [zerosuicide@edc.org](mailto:zerosuicide@edc.org)

[1] Ahmedani, B. K., et al. (2014) Health care contacts in the year before suicide death. *Journal of General Internal Medicine* 29(6):870-7.

[2] Luoma, et al. (2002) Contact with mental health and primary care providers before suicide: a review of the evidence. *American Journal of Psychiatry* 159(6): 909-916.



## Zero Suicide at EDC

Zero Suicide at EDC provides expert training and consultation to guide health and behavioral healthcare organizations implementing the Zero Suicide framework for safer suicide care. Organizations contract with EDC for the experience and tools needed to accelerate Zero Suicide adoption.

 [solutions.edc.org/zero-suicide](https://solutions.edc.org/zero-suicide)