



Top stories in this newsletter



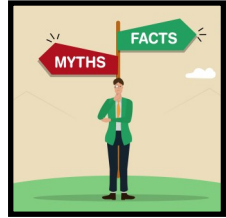
Team Spotlight: Team HOPE Happy to Chat Benches



SPI Member Spotlight: Michael "Mike" Kane



Survivor Support Resources and SPRC State and Community-level Resources



Suicide Myths & Facts

Team Spotlight: Team HOPE Happy to Chat Benches

Improving community connectedness is one of Team Hope's (Mecklenburg, Cabarrus, Union) strategies to prevent and reduce suicide. Team Hope developed "Happy to Chat" signs for public park bench use to invite community members to connect with one another. Promoting connectedness is one of the CDC's seven strategies to prevent suicide: [Preventing Suicide | Suicide Prevention | CDC](#).



Members of Team Hope tested the signs in area parks over a two-month period and created a survey template for testers to record details about chat interactions. Twenty hours of testing was logged, and Team Hope discovered that in each instance of testing, someone from the community was open to chatting.

There were 21 chatters in total, and 62% of chatters were male. Adult males are a population group Team Hope seeks to reach. According to the North Carolina Violent Death Reporting System (NCVDRS), the rate of male suicide is 4 times higher than the female rate in North Carolina.

The "Happy to Chat" signs were equipped with a QR code that allows chatters to scan the code for physical and mental health resources (through links to FindHelpNow.org and 988). While the QR code was not utilized in any of the chat sessions, it could be an available tool for people seeking resources should the signs become permanent.

One of the challenges to the project is determining the next steps for discussing sign sustainability. Currently the signs are removed after each chat session. Members of the coalition need to determine what governmental channels and champions to invite into the discussion.

The Happy to Chat initiative will be featured at the NC Conference on Aging at the end of February. Signs will be available at the conference, held in Chapel Hill, for interested attendees to take home to their communities.

If you'd like to see how the Happy to Chat movement first began, click here: ['Happy to Chat' benches: The woman getting strangers to talk](#).

If you have other questions about the Happy to Chat signs or would like a sign for your community, reach out to Alexa Steverson with Team Hope: alexa.steverson@ncpoisoncontrol.org.

Written by Alexa Steverson

SPI Member Spotlight: Michael "Mike" Kane, MD

About Mike

Mike's expertise is in child and adolescent psychiatry and clinical informatics. Mike is the Director of Clinical Informatics for the Department of Psychiatry and a Lead Informatics Physician for UNC Health. Within the SPI, Mike is a senior faculty and offers an informatics perspective to various projects throughout the spectrum of work happening in the institute.



Mike's "why"

Suicide prevention is important to Mike as it exists within the nexus of his personal and professional interests. According to Mike, "personally, my family has been impacted by suicide and I am aware of the impact suicide has on loved ones and family members. Professionally, it is a complex problem yielding to multi-systemic interventions across content areas of medicine and processes within health services".

Mike's expertise

Mike's suicide prevention expertise lies within his specialized background as a behavioral health clinical informatician. Mike is uniquely qualified to offer solutions to socio-technical challenges facing our health system and our state as it relates to suicide prevention. Mike is a team-player that assists various teams within the SPI in their given domain of expertise.

Written by Michael Kane, MD

Survivor Support Resources

The following resources are available in North Carolina for those who have lost someone to suicide.

- American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP) [Surviving a Suicide Loss: Resource and Healing Guide](#)
- To locate survivor support groups in your area, visit the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention's (AFSP) [Find a Support Group](#)
- [Triangle Survivors of Suicide](#) posts local support groups in Chapel Hill, Raleigh and Wake Forest
- The North Carolina American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP) Chapter has a network of [Healing Conversation](#) trained volunteers that can connect with survivors and offer support, connection, and resources.
- The American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP) offers additional resources for those who have lost someone to suicide, including blog entries with real stories about loss—[AFSP I've Lost Someone](#)



Written by Kelsey Bud and Hannah Harms

Suicide Prevention Resource Center (SPRC) State and Community-level Resources

The Suicide Prevention Resource Center (SPRC) is the only federally supported resource center devoted to advancing the implementation of the National Strategy for Suicide Prevention. SPRC is funded by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA).

- [Recommendations for Local Suicide Prevention Infrastructure](#)
- [Strategic Planning](#)
- [Keys to Success](#): guiding principles for doing the work
- [A Comprehensive Approach to Suicide Prevention](#): strategies, programs, and practices to consider
- [State Infrastructure](#) recommendations
- [Training, Online Courses](#) includes courses on safety planning for youth suicide prevention, talking about lethal means, understanding suicide prevention data and more
- [Training, Virtual Learning Labs](#) includes courses on statewide partnerships, crisis protocols, prevention planning and more
- [CDC Comprehensive Suicide Prevention: Program Profiles](#)



Information provided by Jana Boocock, MSW, CAC, CPS and pulled from sprc.org

Image pulled from sprc.org

Order Free 988 Print Materials for Barbershops or Hair Salons

The North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services is providing free, printed 988 educational materials for barbershops and hair salons. Sign up today for these new window clings and wallet cards. Order materials by February 14, 2025, to receive them by the end of February to share with your community.

- [Order link](#)

Information pulled from NC DHHS, Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities and Substance Use Services Hot Topics listserv, 1/28/25 publication

Suicide Myths & Facts



Myth: If we restrict one means of suicide, such as firearms, people will just turn to other methods to attempt suicide.

Fact: Research from across the world found that restricting one means of suicide does not lead to an increase in the use of other means (Daigle, 2005). This tells us how important it is to reduce access to lethal means for preventing suicide.

Written by Lisa Zhu; References:

Daigle, M. S. (2005). Suicide prevention through means restriction: Assessing the risk of substitution: A critical review and synthesis. *Accident Analysis & Prevention*, 37(4), 625-632.

Stay tuned for new and exciting developments! In future newsletters you can expect information on funding opportunities, new research findings, upcoming trainings, local suicide prevention initiatives, and more.

If you would like to share information in a future edition (questions, events, team spotlight), please reach out to Grace Lutter and Hannah Harms at SPI@unc.edu.