

Black Youth Suicide Prevention

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May 19, 2022



Central East (HHS Region 3)

MHTTC

Mental Health Technology Transfer Center Network

Funded by Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

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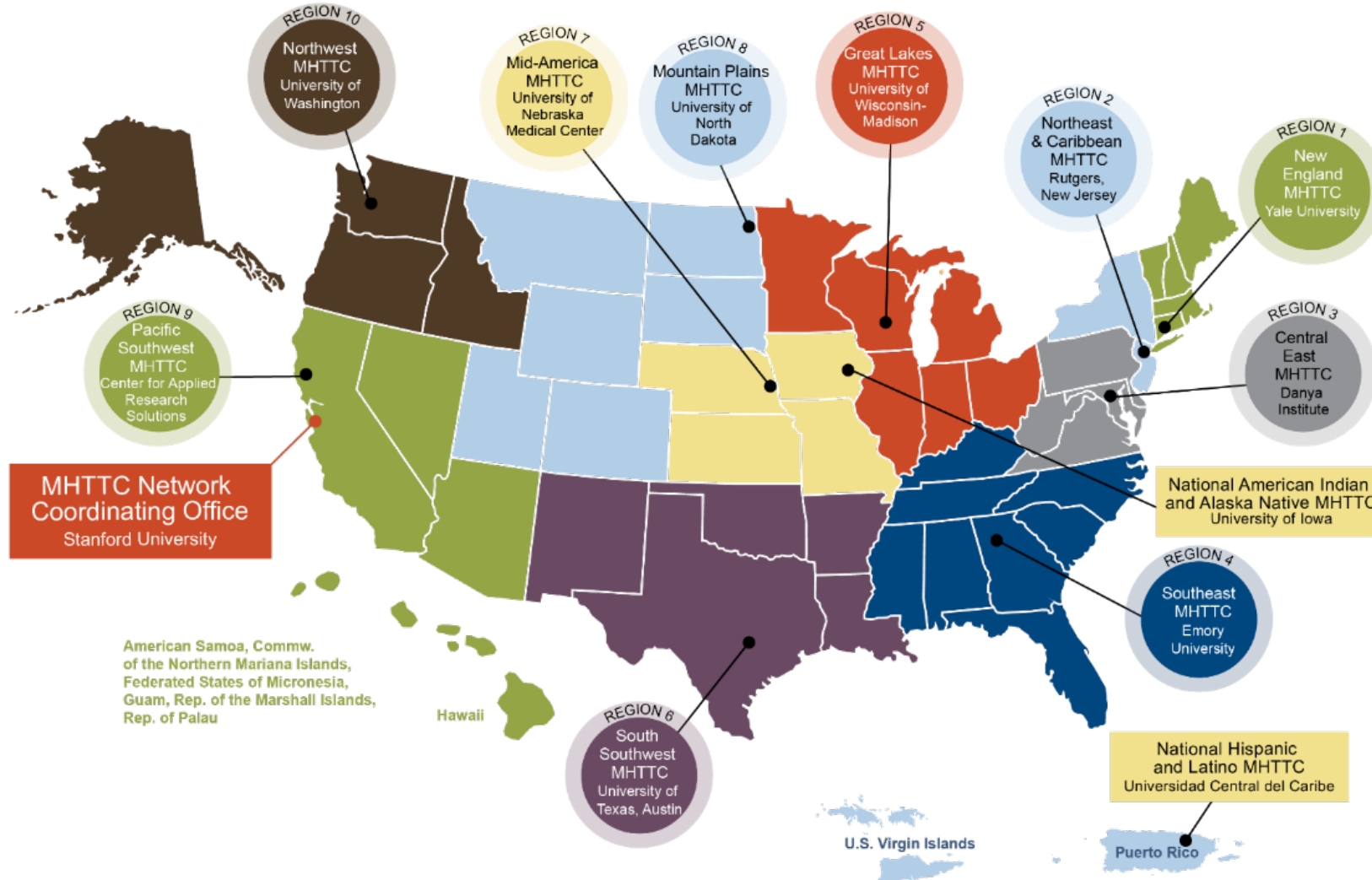


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MHTTC Purpose

The MHTTC Network vision is to unify science, education and service to transform lives through evidence-based and promising treatment and recovery practices in a recovery-oriented system of care.

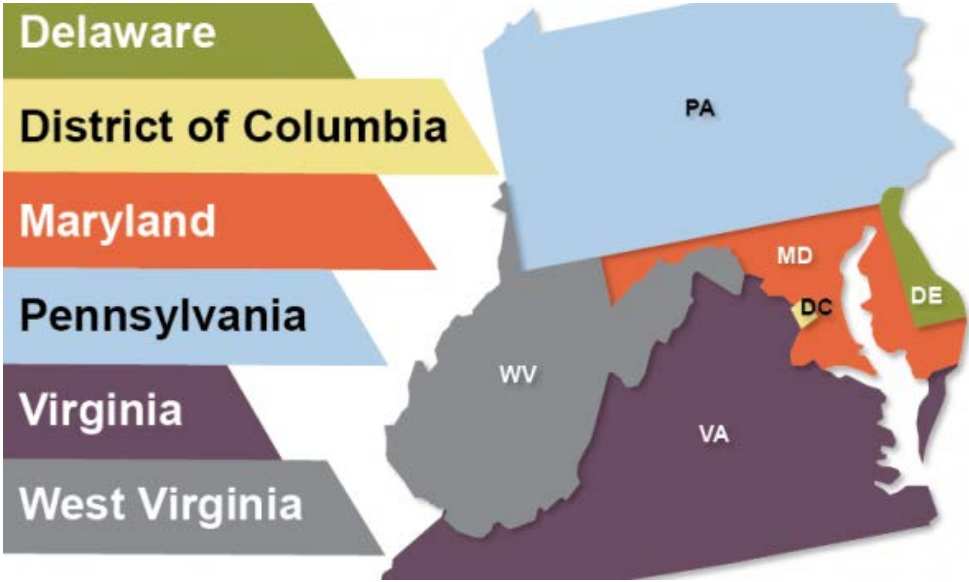


Central East MHTTC Goals

Funded by SAMHSA to:

- **Accelerate** the adoption and implementation of mental health related evidence-based practices
- **Heighten** the awareness, knowledge, and skills of the behavioral health workforce
- **Foster** alliances among culturally diverse practitioners, researchers, policy makers, family members, and consumers
- **Ensure** the availability and delivery of publicly available, free of charge, training and technical assistance

Central East Region 3



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At the time of this presentation, Miriam Delphin-Rittmon served as Assistant Secretary for Mental Health and Substance Use and Administrator of SAMHSA. The contents are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent the official views of, nor an endorsement, by SAMHSA/HHS, or the U.S. Government.

Black Youth Suicide Prevention

Thursday, May 19, 2022

Presenter: Napoleon Higgins, MD
Executive Director, Black Psychiatrists of America

Moderator: Annelle Primm, MD, MPH
Council of Elders, Black Psychiatrists of America

COVID-19: An Unprecedented Disaster

- Over 1M U.S. deaths with disparate levels of morbidity and mortality and economic fallout in Black and other racially marginalized communities
- Increases in rates of suicide among Black youth in recent decades documented in the 2019 Ring the Alarm report
- Since the pandemic, a disturbing spate of suicides among young Black people including high-profile individuals

Today's Program

- Special thanks to the CE-MHTTC for its support of this session of the Black Psychiatrists of America Health Equity Webinar Series
- Focus is regional on DE, MD, PA, VA, DC, and WV, yet information has national relevance
- Napoleon Higgins, MD, Past President, Executive Director, Black Psychiatrists of America, is our featured guest

Disclosures (Speaker/Consultant/Ad Board)

Napoleon B. Higgins, Jr. MD

- Lundbeck
- Otsuka
- Sage
- Biogen
- Supernus

Overall Suicide Rates

- Suicides are among the top 10 causes of death among all age groups
 - Costs billions of dollars of lost productivity
- Historically suicides have been higher among whites than blacks across all age groups
- Growing trend among most groups (except white youths)
- Firearms contribute to 1/2 of all completed suicides
- 123 Suicides per day in US

Children and Suicide

- Second leading cause of death of children 10-24 years old
- Accelerating rates of suicide in children ages 5-12 years old

Rising African-American Suicide Rate

- Suicide rates traditionally have been higher among whites than blacks
- For 13-17 year olds white suicide rates are nearly **double** the rate of black children
- Suicide rates among black teens are increasing at a higher rate than whites

Rising Rates of Black Youth Suicides

- Rates among Black children 5-12 years old are roughly **double** the rate of white children
- Suicide rates have **doubled** among black youth from 1993-2012
 - Rates have declined for white youth 5-12 years old
- 37% of all youth suicides are black children
 - Black children make up 15% of the population
- *Highest increase of all youth suicides are black males

Rising Rates of Black Teenagers and Suicide

1980-1995 Suicide deaths

Suicide deaths from U.S. Surgeon General (Dr. David Satcher)

- The suicide rate among African Americans ages 10 to 14 increased 233%

2001-2017 Suicide deaths

Black females

- 182% increased rate
- Black males
- 60% increased rate

Key Contributing Factors in Black Suicide

- Lack of culturally relevant behavioral health providers
 - Lack of mental health providers
 - Counselors are teaching classes
 - Sharing between schools
- Risk of death due to homicide
- Unresolved trauma
- Perceived racism
- Access to firearms

Key Factors for Suicide of Black Children???

- It is a new trend
- Only recently did we find a marker for this
- Lack of research
- What has happened?

We truly don't know

Key Factors impacting Black Children

- Bullying and teasing
- Lack of access to mental health care
- Racism and racial discrimination
- Social media
 - Looking at others' lives
 - Parents on their phones
- Families are busy
- Single parent homes
 - Income disparities in men and women

Key Factors impacting Black Children (cont.d)

- Poverty and low SES
- Lack of neighborhood play
- Trauma and violence in the home and community
 - What ever happens in the home, happens with the kid
 - Thoughts that children do not experience trauma

Barriers to Care for Black Children

- Fear
- Access
- Gov't insurance (Medicaid)
 - Politics
- Stigma of mental illness
 - Lack of awareness
 - Fear of the medical model
 - Going to others, doctors last
 - Not seeking professional help
 - Labeled as weak, crazy

Why the higher rates in early to late Adolescence? (10-24 years old)

- Untreated mental illness
- Society, changes and stress
- Parental workload
 - Squeezing of the middle class
- Pressures of society
- Blind eye vs. not a priority
- Individual versus the collective
- Social media

Why the higher rates of suicide in Youth (5-12 years old)?

- Unable to tolerate things in the moment
- May not understand death and finality
- Lack of language development to explain their issues
- Not able to reason through the situation
 - Anger, despair, hopelessness

Prone to Impulsivity

Young Children and Suicide Risks

- Youth Suicides
 - Only 1/3rd had shown symptoms of depression
 - 60% of 5-12 year olds primarily ADHD Hyperactive Type
 - *Impulsivity*
 - *Undiagnosed mood or affective disorders?*
 - Hanging, strangulation and suffocation
- Adolescent Suicides
 - 2/3rd show symptoms of depression
 - Firearms and strangulation

Undiagnosed Dyslexia and Learning Disabilities

- 42% of children and adolescents with intellectual disabilities will have suicidal thoughts or gestures
- Most at risk
 - Higher than average IQ
 - Comorbid psychiatric diagnosis
 - Psychosocial stressors

Children and Depression Symptoms

- Present differently
- Somatic
 - Stomach and headache
- Irritability, hostility, anger
- Behavioral issues
- Are not able to articulate due to lack of words to explain
 - “what’s that...what does that mean”
 - Clinicians not able to use their language
- Issues in schoolwork and other disciplinary issues

Depressive symptoms to look for in schools?

Children are with educators more than with parents

- Hostility, hyperactivity and impulsivity
 - Irritable aggression
- Looks sad or withdrawn
- Comes to class and puts their head down
- Often with somatic symptoms
 - Asking to go to the nurse's office
- Not wanting to go to school
- Withdrawn from activities and play

Bullying

- School ignoring complaints
 - Not being able to identify, recognize
 - Racial bias
 - Hands tied
 - Is it a big deal?

- Interaction between students, teachers and parents matter
- Black children are more likely to be bullied (prevention and detection)

Today's discourse and public figures

Media Coverage and Suicide Contagion

- Risks increase with popularity and with admired persons
- Responsible reporting
- Stories of hope and resilience decreases risks

How do you decrease suicide risks?

- Research targeting those at highest risk
- Improving access to mental health services
- Reducing access to lethal means
- Increasing culturally competent mental health professionals
 - Black mental health professionals

Decreasing risks: Training teachers and youth providers

- Curriculum for training
- Expanding the role of counselors
- Increase the number of counselors and increase mental health professionals in schools
 - Social workers for impoverished communities and schools

Conclusion: Resiliency and Protective Factors

- Identifying with your own race, walking between groups
 - Code switching
- Organized religion
- Activities

- “Risk factors are not predictive factors due to protective factors”
 - Carl Bell, MD

The Profile for Youth Suicide

- ADHD
 - Learning Disabilities
 - Underlying mood disorder
 - Normal to elevated IQ
 - Recognition of the educational difficulties
 - Trauma
 - Bullying
 - Lack of social supports (home and school)
 - Hopelessness
 - Perceived Racism
 - Increasingly Black

Suicide Prevention Resource Center

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Questions



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