

*Tulare & Kings Counties*



# SUICIDE PREVENTION *Task Force*

[www.sptf.org](http://www.sptf.org)

# IMPACT REPORT



WELLNESS • RECOVERY • RESILIENCE

# WHO WE ARE

## Mission

The mission of the Tulare and Kings Counties Suicide Prevention Task Force (SPTF) is to foster the hope of suicide-free Kings and Tulare Counties through education, empowerment, and innovation.

## Vision

A community without suicide

## Initiatives

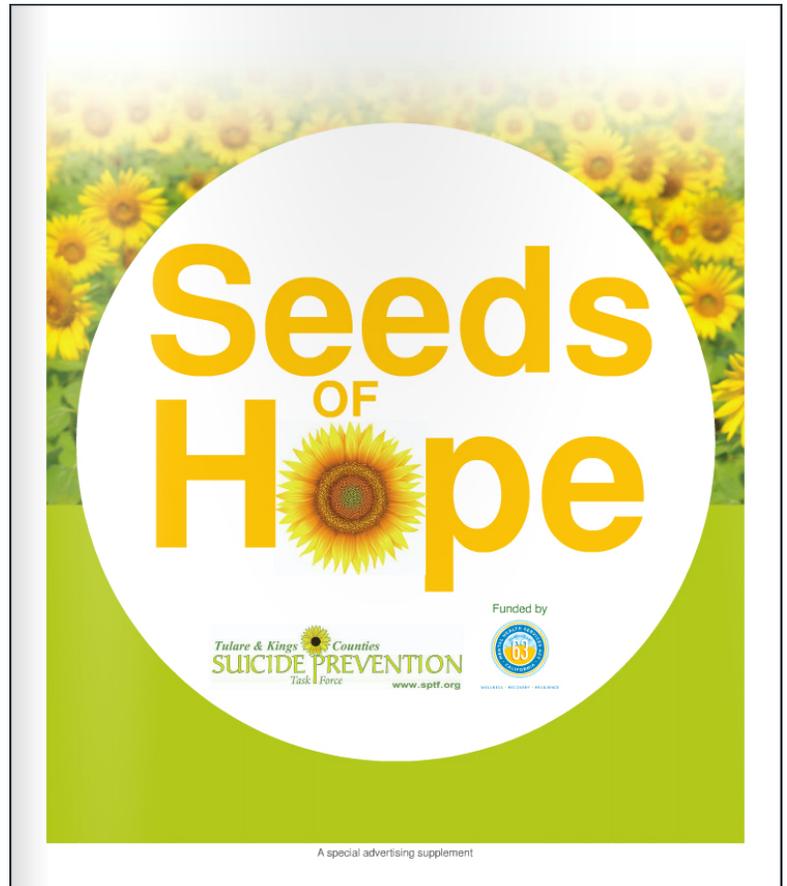
- To promote public awareness that suicide is a preventable public health problem
- To promote effective clinical and professional practices
- To develop and implement suicide prevention programs
- To improve and expand data collection systems

## Composition

Voting members are appointed by the Executive Committee and elected by the membership to represent the populations of each county and sub-populations that are at high risk of suicide, as well as relevant organizations in each county. All residents of Kings and Tulare Counties are encouraged to participate in Task Force meetings and activities.

## Meetings

The Task Force holds general meetings every other month, in Hanford or Visalia, with committee meetings taking place in months in which it does not hold general meetings. The public is welcome and encouraged to attend all general and committee meetings. A calendar that lists meeting dates and links to agendas, as well as workshops and other events related to suicide prevention, can be found on the Task Force's website, SPTF.org.



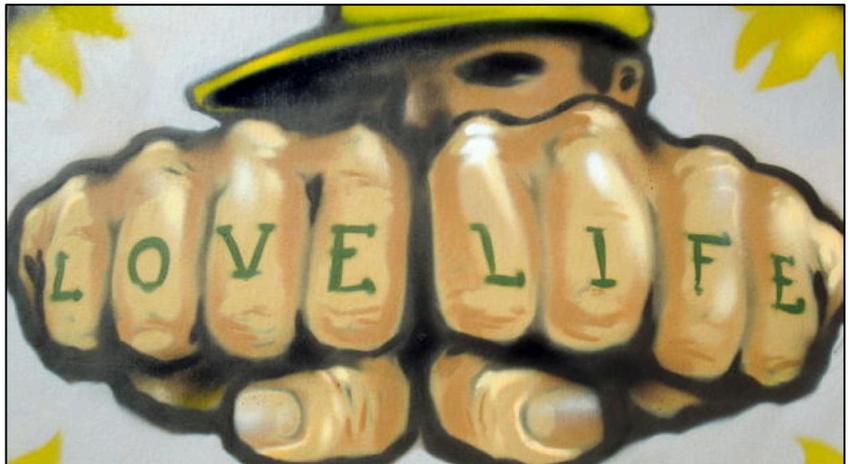
## HOW WE DEVELOPED

**2003:** Six suicides by teenagers took place in Lindsay, Porterville, and Visalia. The Tulare County Child Abuse Prevention Council sponsored community forums on the topic. Consequentially, a task force on suicide was founded and supported by the Tulare County Health & Human Services Agency, but it lost momentum and attendance declined.

**2007:** An alarming increase in suicide-related deaths occurred in Tulare County. Officials from public and private organizations met to address the issue of suicide and open dialogue relating to awareness and prevention. Participants attempted to effect change, but a lack of supportive funding made progress difficult.

**2008 to early 2009:** The Tulare County Health & Human Services Agency's Mental Health branch began extensive outreach to communicate with residents across Tulare County regarding their concerns and priorities relating to mental health needs. These efforts were a direct result of Proposition 63 (also known as the Mental Health Services Act or MHSA), passed by California voters in 2004.

**Early to mid-2009:** The Tulare County Mental Health branch continued the process of interacting with the community regarding suicide prevention needs specific to Tulare County. These efforts led to the creation and adoption of the Tulare County Mental Health Services Act: Prevention and Early Intervention Plan. One of the three primary elements of the plan was suicide prevention.



**Late 2009:** The Tulare County Suicide Prevention Task Force (SPTF) solidified plans to meet as a group with broad representation to advance suicide prevention, establish effective services, and increase awareness of the signs and symptoms of suicide risk. The SPTF launched awareness activities and established two suicide prevention pilot projects.

**2010:** On May 21, the SPTF, with MHSA funding, sponsored the Community of Hope Conference, on the topic of suicide prevention. More than 800 people attended. The first Festival of Hope was held at the Tulare Outlet Center to educate the public about the problem of suicide and the availability of helpful resources. Festivals of Hope were held each year through 2014.

**2011:** A formal partnership with Kings County Behavioral Health began, leading to the renaming of the Task Force as the Tulare and Kings Counties Suicide Prevention Task Force and its leadership and membership being drawn from both counties. This year also began the offering of some of the best suicide prevention and related training available, for mental health professionals and non-professionals.

**2012 - 2015:** A large variety of programs began and new trainings were offered. In addition, evaluation of the programs and trainings was started. Information from the evaluations is being used to determine which activities should continue and whether they should be expanded or modified.

# WHAT WE DO

## Outreach and Awareness

A major aim of the SPTF is to make the people of Kings and Tulare Counties aware of the preventable problem of suicide, its major risk factors, and how people who are struggling with suicidal thoughts or other risk factors can get help. The SPTF has reached out to the general public as well as to sub-populations that are at higher risk of suicide, including veterans, farmers, and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning individuals.

## Events

Each year from 2010 to 2014 the SPTF organized the Festival of Hope in Tulare. This event has raised awareness of the problem of suicide and provided information about suicide prevention and free resources in a fun, family-friendly atmosphere with art and entertainment. 2014 was the final year of this event.



**From 2010 to 2014  
an estimated  
13,000 people  
attended at least  
one Festival of  
Hope.**

The Task Force has sponsored the Slick Rock Student Film Festival since 2011. This annual festival in Visalia includes a category for suicide prevention public service announcements created by high school students. Winning videos can be viewed at [www.tcoe.org/SlickRock/](http://www.tcoe.org/SlickRock/).

In addition, the SPTF attended community events across Kings and Tulare Counties to inform the public about suicide and the resources available for individuals who may be at risk. The wide variety of events included a skateboard competition, a



professional baseball game, an arts festival, a Latino conference, a health fair on an Indian reservation, veterans' meetings, a farmers market, a country music festival, and events specifically geared toward the homeless, senior citizens, vocational students, women, and faith communities.

**SPTF members  
performed  
outreach at more  
than 160  
community events.**

## Publications and Materials

The SPTF has developed publications and other materials to further its mission. These include a wallet card that lists major risk factors of suicide on the front and resources on the back, a 12-page newspaper insert that describes the SPTF and several of its programs, and a comic book about suicide prevention.

The Task Force has also created and distributed a wide variety of additional materials that raise awareness of suicide, its risk factors, and available resources. These include pens with pull-out resource banners and stress relievers in the shape of a sunflower, the SPTF's symbol of hope for ending suicide. All Task Force resources prominently feature the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline telephone number (800-273-8255), the primary resource for people at immediate risk of suicide.



**Since 2011 the SPTF distributed to the public more than 170,000 copies of publications it created.**

## The Media and Art

The SPTF has reached out extensively to the people of Kings and Tulare Counties through radio, television, newspapers and other print publications, billboards, and the internet. Radio and television stations and publications in Spanish and English were selected as well as stations that represent a wide variety of musical and entertainment tastes.

Public art displays also increase awareness of suicide and spread the message that there is hope for people who are considering suicide. The Task Force has commissioned works of art by professional artists. In addition, students who participate in one of the SPTF's programs, Reduction of Stigma Through Art-Targeted Education (RESTATE), have created hundreds of works of art in a variety of media. They have been displayed for the public at a variety of venues in both Kings and Tulare Counties.



## Services and Supports

### Trainings

The SPTF has offered trainings for people in the mental health field and members of the general public. Seventeen sessions of nine specialized workshops for mental health clinicians have been given since July 2011.

Nearly 100 training sessions have been provided to members of the public. The training offered most often was Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST), which helps people feel more comfortable, confident, and competent in helping to prevent the immediate risk of suicide of someone they know. Mental Health First Aid, which teaches about some of the most common mental illnesses and how best to get help to people who may have a mental illness, was also offered.

**“I did not know the signs of suicide when my son took his life. If I can help at least one person, then it has been worth it.”**  
– ASIST training participant

### Programs

#### *Local Outreach to Suicide Survivors (LOSS) Team*

Established to provide immediate resources and support to residents of Kings and Tulare Counties who experience the loss of loved ones to suicide. Supports the mental health of those who experience loss and to prevent the loss of those individuals to suicide. There have been more than 50 visits so far to individuals affected by possible deaths by suicide.



#### *Survivor Grief and Bereavement Support Group and Voucher Program*

A group active in Visalia since 2008 that supports and provides resources to individuals who are impacted by the suicide of someone they know. More than 250 people have participated. Grief and bereavement counseling vouchers are offered to individuals who have been impacted by suicide. Over 50 individuals have received vouchers.

**:DRAW**

Depression Reduction Achieving Wellness

#### *Depression Reduction Achieving Wellness (DRAW)*

A locally-developed program aimed at reducing the amount of depression and suicide risk in students age 18 and older. Provides outreach and training to students, faculty, and staff; depression screening for students; brief therapy; and linkages to needed services. Over 300 students have been screened for depression.

#### *Check-In with You: The Older Adult Hopelessness Screening (OAHS) Program*

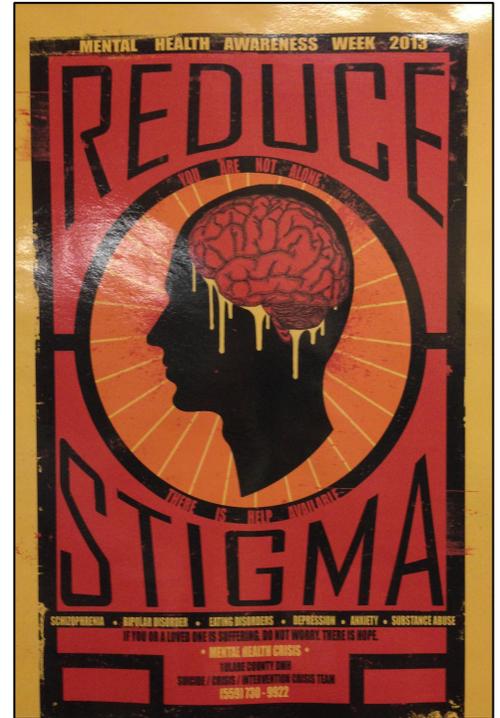
A locally-developed program started to address the rising concern about suicide in the older adult population. Adults age 55 and older at the Visalia Health Care Center are voluntarily screened for hopelessness, a major suicide risk factor. Those who screen as moderate or severe are offered services such as short-term therapy and linkages to appropriate services. Accepted into the national mental health program best practice registry. More than 2,600 people have been screened.

**Reduction and Elimination of Stigma Through Art-Targeted Education (RESTATE)**

A locally-developed program in which high school students learn about mental health, including depression and suicidal thoughts, and create artistic projects with a theme related to mental health. More than 1,200 students have participated.

**The Trevor Project**

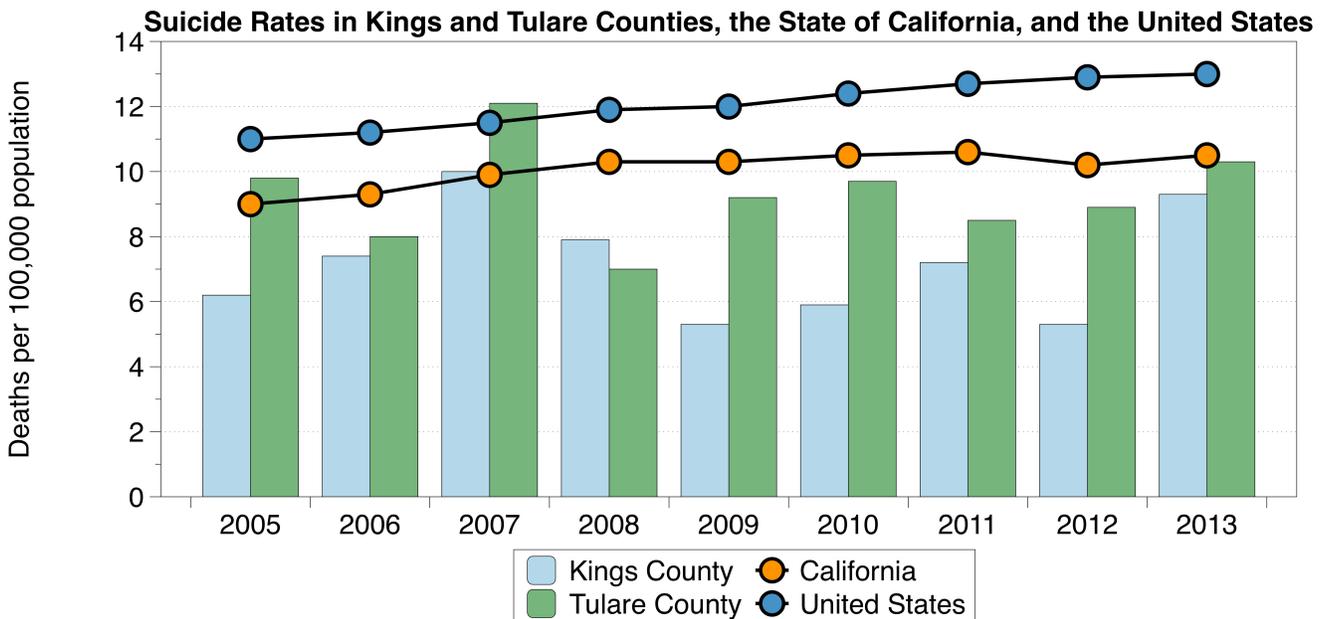
Provides crisis intervention and suicide intervention services to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning young people, ages 13-24. Performed outreach at more than 140 community events since 2011. Offered over 150 Trevor Lifeguard Workshops that teach about suicide prevention and tolerance, attended by more than 3,800 youth and adults.



**Over 15,000 people have been impacted by SPTF trainings and programs since July 2011.**

**Information on Suicide in Kings and Tulare Counties**

In close cooperation with the Coroner’s Offices and while maintaining strict personal confidentiality, the SPTF collects information on suicides in each county. This includes general data on the individuals who completed suicide, such as their age, sex, means of death, date, location, known reason, and similar information. We collect and analyze this information in order to track the extent of suicide in our counties, and to enable us to spot any trends that may require special attention.



## WHERE WE ARE GOING

1. Strengthen the Task Force's volunteer membership through outreach and training.
2. Support the Local Outreach to Suicide Survivors (LOSS) Team.
3. Continue to offer broad-based education and training opportunities to professionals and to the public.
4. Increase targeted outreach efforts.
5. Continue the strategic planning process, implementing goals from the National Strategy for Suicide Prevention that meet local needs.
6. Increase Task Force and community member awareness of local suicide data and trends.



## HOW YOU CAN GET INVOLVED

1. **Attend a Task Force meeting.** See the calendar on [SPTF.org](http://SPTF.org) for upcoming meetings. Community members are welcome and encouraged to attend all general and committee meetings.
2. **Participate in a training.** Consider taking Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST) to learn how you can help prevent suicide or Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) to learn about the most common mental illnesses and how best to get help to people who have a mental illness. These trainings are open to all residents of Kings and Tulare counties. Workshops for people who work in the mental health field are also available. See the calendar on [SPTF.org](http://SPTF.org).
3. **Join the Local Outreach to Suicide Survivors (LOSS) Team** if you would like to support people who have been impacted by the suicide of a loved one. E-mail [sptf@tularehhsa.org](mailto:sptf@tularehhsa.org) if you want to help.
4. **Donate** to SPTF by clicking on "Donate" at [SPTF.org](http://SPTF.org). It is quick and easy, and all funds support SPTF activities.
5. **Follow the SPTF's Facebook page** by clicking on "Like" to receive regular updates on Task Force activities and events.

## FREE HELPFUL RESOURCES

1. **The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline, 800-273-8255**, connects people in crisis, whether or not they are having suicidal thoughts, with skilled, trained crisis workers who will listen to their problems and tell them about mental health services in their area. It is free of charge and available at any time. All calls are confidential.
2. **The Trevor Lifeline, 866-488-7386**, is free and available at any time, to provide confidential help to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning people who are thinking about suicide.
3. **The Veterans Crisis Line, 800-273-8255, Press "1"**, provides free, confidential help at any time to veterans and their family members who are experiencing thoughts of suicide.
4. **SPTF.org, the website of the Tulare and Kings Counties Suicide Prevention Task Force**, provides a variety of free resources on suicide and suicide prevention.

