

Santa Cruz County Suicide Rate Dwarfs California Average

The California Mental Health Services Authority is working hard to decrease suicide rates across the state.

By **JACOB BOURNE** (Open Post) (/users/jacob-bourne-2)

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Suicide a sad reality in California. Even in Santa Cruz County,

multiple suicides occur each year.

Data just released by the California Mental Health Services Authority (CalMHSA) shows that in 2010, 3,823 Californians committed suicide and another 16,425 were hospitalized for self-inflicted injuries. The suicide figure is up from 2009 (3,760) which increased from 2008 (3,729), according to the California Department of Healthcare Services (DHCS).

In Santa Cruz County, there were 38 suicides in 2009 (29 males and 9 females) and 32 in 2008 (27 males and 5 females), DHCS reports show. Those figure put local suicide far above state marks. Across California there is a suicide rate of 9.7 per 100,000 people. In 2008, the Santa Cruz County rate was 12.0 per 100,000, which increased to 14.2 per 100,000 in 2009.

CalHMSA is working hard to curb the suicide trends of California with its Suicide Prevention Initiative which is going on right now.

“These facts are a grim reminder of the need for prevention and early intervention programs in California,” said Stephanie Welch, senior program manager for CalMHSA. “The Know the Signs campaign serves as a way for us to educate our communities how to play a role in the prevention and early intervention process by reaching out to loved ones who may be at risk for suicide.”

According to CalMHSA, it is important to target not only those struggling with suicidal thoughts, but the people closest to them — family and friends, because loved ones must recognize the signs.

“While the signs for suicide can be subtle, they are there,” said Anara Guard, suicide prevention advisor to the campaign. “The campaign

goals are to educate people on what those signs are, to recognize them when they are present, and how to intervene early before the situation becomes critical.”

To see an interactive chart of the signs of suicide, click here (<http://www.suicideispreventable.org>).

The three-year suicide prevention campaign is funded by the voter-approved Mental Services Act. It is meant to achieve the following goals:

- Prepare more Californians to prevent suicide by increasing knowledge of warning signs, how to offer help and local resources.
- Provide individuals who are going through tough times with resources, hope and reassurance that help is available.
- Work with the news media to increase reporting about suicide in ways that are consistent with national recommendations.

For more information on the Know the Signs campaign, visit www.suicideispreventable.org (<http://www.suicideispreventable.org/>).

See the breakdown of Santa Cruz County suicide stats below:

Santa Cruz County California 2008 Suicides 38 3,729 Per 100,000 12.0
2009 Suicides 32 3,760 Per 100,000 9.7
2010 Suicides N/A 3,823 Per 100,000 N/A 9.7

The Know the Signs Campaign encourages anyone who is in crisis to call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-TALK (8255) to speak with an experienced crisis counselor 24 hours a day,

seven days a week.

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