

Taking Care of Us

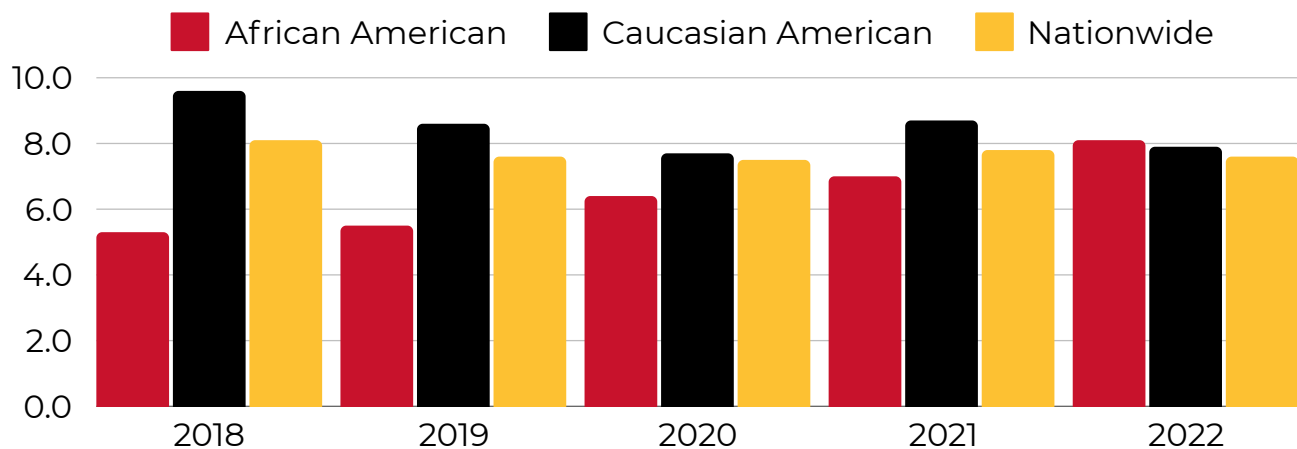
Factsheet and Resources

Taking Care of Us is a collaborative campaign with the Maryland Department of Health (MDH) Behavioral Health Administration's Office of Suicide Prevention, the Office of Minority Health and Health Disparities, and the Black Mental Health Alliance. **Our goal is to bring attention to the increasing number of deaths by suicide among young African American men and women, especially between the ages of 15 and 34.**



Did You Know?

A report by PEW Research with data from the CDC Wonder database shows that the suicide rate among Black youth ages 10 to 19 surpassed that of their white peers for the first time in 2022, increasing 54% since 2018, compared to a 17% decrease for white youth. In fact, the suicide rate among Black adolescents is increasing faster than other racial and ethnic groups.



What are signs that someone is at risk of suicide?

Warning signs that may mean someone is thinking about suicide may include:



- Talking about wanting to die
- Isolation behaviors (suffering in silence)
- Increased anxiety
- Substance use/misuse
- Talking about being a burden or feeling trapped
- Extreme mood swings
- Increased anger or rage
- Expressing hopelessness
- Talking about being in unbearable pain
- Sleeping too much or too little
- Looking unkempt or disheveled
- Grades dropping
- Not partaking in activities that once brought them joy
- Giving away important or meaningful items
- Making a plan for suicide by looking for a way to access lethal means (firearms, medications, rope, local tall buildings and bridges, etc.)



What do I do if I see these signs in a peer or within myself?

If you or someone you know shows these signs, or other expressions of hopelessness ("I can't take this," "You'd be better off without me," or "I am waiting on God"), be kind, non-judgmental, and direct. **Speaking about suicide will not put the thought into someone's head.** Oftentimes, the person will feel a sense of relief because they can finally speak about their pain with a trusted person. It can be scary to feel these emotions or to have a friend or peer speak about suicide. Remember, it is not your responsibility to solve these challenges alone. Instead, you can find a trusted adult who can help with these challenges.



Always ask direct questions like:

"Are you thinking about killing yourself?"

"Are you thinking about suicide?"

Talk to them in private, and listen to their story. Try to be nonjudgmental, and avoid minimizing their problems or try to solve their problems. Encourage them to connect to help and tell an adult.

If the person tells you that they are thinking about suicide, or if you think they are at risk, tell an adult immediately. **Do NOT keep concerns about suicide a secret.** It is important to take all mention of suicide seriously.

Find a Trusted Adult

A trusted adult can provide comfort, guidance, and support. You are not responsible for helping anyone alone. If there is a concern about suicide, adults at your school can get a student assessed for suicide risk and connected to the most helpful resources.

- **Who Can Be a Trusted Adult?** This could be a parent, family member, teacher, school counselor, coach, or any adult you feel comfortable with and trust.
- **How to Start the Conversation:** It can be as simple as, "I'm going through a tough time/I am worried about someone and I need to talk. Can we chat?"
- **Keep Trying:** Sometimes the first adult you talk to might not be helpful. Don't give up! There are adults who will help. You can go to mental health professionals at your school, or reach out to 988 for help.
- **Keep Yourself Safe:** It is important during these difficult situations to not only ensure the safety of your peer, but yourself as well.

Call, Text or Chat 988

988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline provides 24/7, 365 assistance for behavioral health concerns. 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline can connect you to local mental health resources near you. You can call, text, or chat 988. 988 also offers multiple language options for accessibility.

988lifeline.org