

# SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY COMMISSION ON AGING

[www.slocounty.ca.gov/coa.htm](http://www.slocounty.ca.gov/coa.htm)

**Meeting Date:** Wednesday September 25, 2024  
**Time:** 10:00 am - Noon  
**Location:** **DSS Building, 3433 South Higuera Street, Room #101, SLO**

- ✓ Call to Order
- ✓ Flag Salute (please stand if able)
- ✓ Check/announce meeting being recorded.
- ✓ Public Comment and Member/Agency Updates – *burning desires from members or guests about current concerns, issues, events - 2 min. max*

**Introductions:** Members and Guests (please provide your name, Commission position, and brief agency description)

**Member rollcall:** Chair establish Quorum.

**Approve Minutes:** August 28, 2024

**Presentation:** **Suicide Prevention in Older Adults**  
***Panel Information and Discussion***

**Presenters:**

- Brita Connelly**, Program Manager, Training and Outreach, Suicide Prevention Coordinator, SLO County Behavioral Health
- Dr. Susan Kolderup**, Psychologist, SLO Veterans Center
- Lacey Chamblin**, LMFT, Counseling Director, Hospice of SLO County
- Dr. Sandra Thomas**, **psychologist**, Wilshire Community Services
- Steven Willey**, Director of Volunteer and Community Education, Wilshire Community Services

**Break 10 minutes**

**New Applicants for Membership**

Agency Representative Appointed – Introducing Susannah Fenton - AAA  
Alternate Member at Large – Applicant Claryce Knupper (Introduce and vote)

**Reports:**

- ASPC (5 min) – Jerry Mihaic
- AAA (5 min) – Susannah Fenton
- Veterans Updates (5 min) – Paul Worsham
- Scam Report (10 min) – Tristan O’Neil DA’s office

**Next Meeting: October 23, 2024 – HICAP Presents Medicare Open Enrollment Changes & Choices**

***Please submit agenda and program items, ideas, and feedback to  
[slocommissiononaging@gmail.com](mailto:slocommissiononaging@gmail.com)***

## **SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY COMMISSION ON AGING**

**Department of Social Services Building, Conference Room #101 3433 South Higuera,  
San Luis Obispo, CA 93401**

**September 25<sup>th</sup>, 2024 Minutes**

**Members Present:** Maryanne Zarycka, Anita Shower, Mike Bossenberry, Sue Gibson, Paige Anderson, Jerry Mihaic, Charmaine Petersen, Kristin Allen, Paulina Flores Jimenez, Danielle Raiss, Ilene Brill, Jamie Moothart, Jessica Yates, Susannah Fenton, Paul Worsham

**Members Absent:** Anne McCracken, Frank Triggs, Lori Allidin, Tristan O'Neil, Alexis Okumura, Louise Justice, Dianna Votaw, Kristy Edwards

### **Call to Order: 10:00 am**

Flag Salute.

"Meeting is Being Recorded" Announcement

### **Public Comment:**

#### **Mike Bossenberry**

- Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) training offered
- Mental Health First Aid is an evidence-based, early-intervention course that teaches participants about mental health and substance use challenges. Identify. Understand. Respond.
- Oct 3<sup>rd</sup>, 17<sup>th</sup> and November 7<sup>th</sup>
- More information through Transitions Mental Health Association or Behavioral Health
- Reduced cost through Transitions Mental Health Association

#### **Sue Gibson**

- 2024 Walk to End Alzheimer's
- Mission Plaza  
989 Chorro St.  
San Luis Obispo, CA
- Walk time 10:30am
- 1 ½ mile walk

#### **Paige Anderson**

- October 7<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> all buses in the county will be free

#### **Jerry Mihaic**

- Master Plan for Aging will be brought to light on October 8<sup>th</sup> at the county supervisors meeting
- Encourage to wear orange and blue to those who want to attend these are the colors of representation

#### **Laura DeLoye**

- **CCPN Senior Health Expo**
- resource fair for a fun day filled with wellness activities, health screenings, and valuable resources
- Saturday, October 19<sup>th</sup> 9:00am – 12:00pm

- 325 Posada Ln, Templeton CA 93465
- **Experiencing Loss in Pieces: Dementia & Anticipatory Grief Workshop**
- Tuesday, October 29<sup>th</sup> 10:00am-11:30am
- 1911 Johnson Av, San Luis Obispo CA 93401
- Collaboration between as Hospice of SLO County, Community Counseling Center, and Alzheimer's Association
- CEU's available at no cost
- New intern introduced

#### **Rod Brown**

- South County Chamber of Commerce Regional Center Resource Senior Fair on November 19<sup>th</sup>
- Final draft distributed
- Cost for a vendor fee

#### **Maryanne Zarycka**

- Supervisor's rep for District 5 is needed for committee
- Supervisor's rep for District 4 possibility needed for committee more information to come

**Approval of Minutes:** First motion was made to accept August 2024 minutes by Mike Bossenberry, Paul Worsham seconded the motion. Approved Unanimously.

#### **Presentations:**

**Brita Connelly:** Program Manager, Training and Outreach, Suicide Prevention Coordinator, SLO County Behavioral Health

#### **Older Adult Suicide Prevention**

##### **Overview**

- Suicide data for senior/older adults
- Suicide & Stigma
- Risk factors for suicide in seniors/older adults
- Warning Signs
- How/when to reach out
- Local support

##### **Accurate Language & Concepts About Suicide**

- Died of/by Suicide – A death that occurred as the result of a mental health condition with a medically treatable cause, or by severe psychological distress with no apparent way out.
- Fatal or Non-Fatal Attempt – Language about suicide that uses illness-based language. Similar to fatal or non-fatal heart attack
- Person with Lived Experience – A person with lived experience of suicide who has either struggled with suicidal thoughts and/or behaviors or an attempt survivor.
- Loss Survivor – An individual who has lost someone they care about to suicide. Can be further bereaved by suicide, experiencing a high level of psychological, physical, and/or social distress for a long period of time.

- Suicidal Ideation – Thinking about, considering, or making a plan to die by suicide. Can be passive or active.

### **A few facts...**

- In 2020, an estimated 12.2 million American adults seriously thought about suicide, 3.2 million planned a suicide attempt, and 1.2 million attempted suicide
- There is no *single* cause of suicide
- Suicide attempts tend to be more lethal in older adults due to:
  - Careful planning & lethal methods
  - Other health issues
  - Less likely to be discovered and rescued

### **Suicide & Stigma**

- Suicide death is stigmatized across all age groups
  - Often seen as being 'weak'
  - Sometimes seen as the person was 'selfish'
- Older adults were raised in a time where it was still considered a 'sin' and was often considered 'illegal'
- We see higher rates in men than women, why?

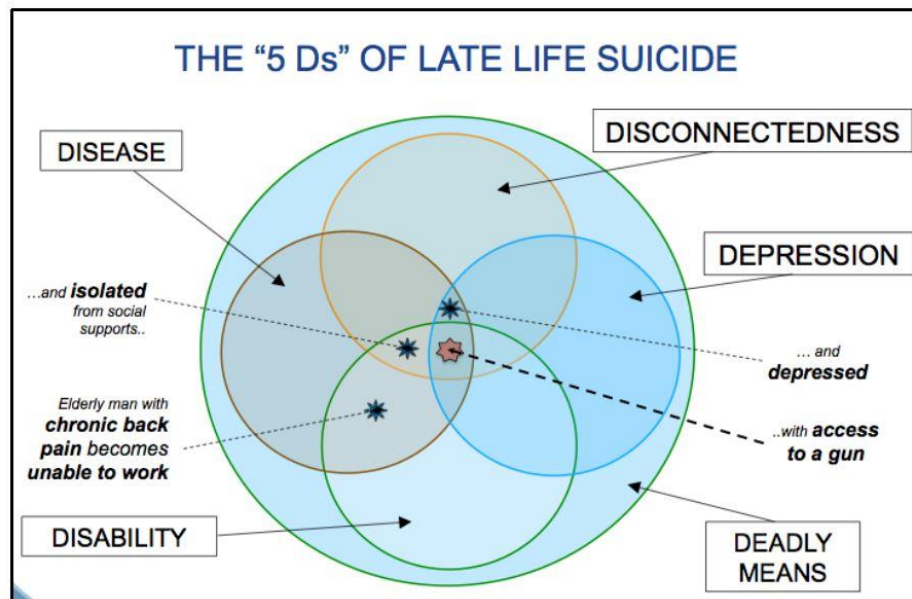
### **Risk Factors**

- Depression & other mental health problems
- Substance use disorder (alcohol & prescription medication)
- Physical illness, disability, and pain (especially if any of these are chronic)
- Social isolation & loneliness
- Loss of a loved one, especially to suicide
- Financial & food insecurity
- Exposure to a traumatic event

### **Protective Factors**

- Strengthen economic supports
  - Strengthen household financial security
  - Housing stabilization policies
- Strengthen access and delivery of suicide care
  - Coverage of mental health conditions in health insurance policies
  - Reduce provider shortages in underserved areas
  - Safer suicide care through systems change
- Create protective environments
  - Reduce access to lethal means among persons at risk of suicide
  - Community-based policies to reduce excessive alcohol use
- Promote connectedness
  - Peer programs
  - Community engagement activities
- Teach coping and problem-solving skills
  - Social-emotional learning programs
  - Family relationship programs
- Identify and support people at risk

- Gatekeeper training
- Crisis intervention
- Treatment for people at risk of suicide
- Treatment to prevent re-attempts



### Warning Signs of Suicide

- Talking about wanting to die or about suicide
- Talking about feeling hopeless or having no reason to live
- Looking for ways to kill oneself
- Loss of interest in activities that used to be enjoyable
- Cutting back on self-care and grooming
- Being alone for long periods of time, becoming isolated
- Breaking medical regimens or skipping appointments
- Feeling hopeless or worthless
- When combined with other warning signs, giving things away, or making changes in will
- Obtaining lethal means such as firearms or stock-piling medication
- Preoccupation with death or lack of concern about personal safety
- Increased use of alcohol or other substances

### When to reach out...

- If you see one or more of these warning signs, it's time to reach out
- Start the conversation
  - Mention the warning signs you are noticing
  - "I noticed..."
- Ask about suicide, be direct
  - "Are you thinking about suicide/killing yourself?"
- Listen
  - Express concern, nonverbal communication, reassure

### Local Support

- County Behavioral Health/Drug & Alcohol Services
- Crisis Stabilization Unit
- Habitat for Humanity
  - Home Preservation Program
    - Low-income senior homeowner repairs
- Wilshire Health & Community Services
  - Provides behavioral health services to older adults
  - Rides, errands, and more
  - Companionship through volunteer-based in-home visits
  - Counseling & Therapy
- Friendship Line 800-971-0016
- Central Coast Hotline 800-783-0607
- Transitions-Mental Health Association
- Family Support, Work Programs, Central Coast Hotline, Community Programs, Mental Health Services
- Area Agency on Aging
- Hospice of SLO County
- Care Management Services, In-Home Support, Grief Counseling, Pet Peace of Mind, & more!

**Lacey Chamblin:** LMFT, Counseling Director, Hospice of SLO County  
**Services**

- Grief counseling
  - Individually
  - Family
- Grief support groups
- Spousal grief groups
- Community grief response
- Suicide bereavement groups
  - Second and last Wednesday of the month
  - 5:30pm - 7:00pm
  - Meeting in person
  - 1304 Pacific St., San Luis Obispo CA 93401, Hospice of SLO County,
  - Support group for those left behind after someone important to them dies by suicide. The group is an opportunity to share with others who have had a similar experience.
  - Sign up <http://www.hospiceslo.org/support-groups>
- Services are free

**Dr. Sandra Thomas:** Psychologist, Wilshire Community Services

- *Effects* of loneliness and socialized isolation among older adults
  - Loneliness is subjective it is the distressed feeling alone or isolated

- Social isolation is the lack of social contact and having few to people to interact with
- *Depression* in seniors
  - Depression is associated with loss
  - Declining health, death of loved ones, moving to a new community,
  - While depressed seniors experience persistent negative thoughts of wanting to live
  - Negative thoughts can lead to question their role in life, especially if they need of people on basic needs
  - This may lead to suicide thoughts
- *Role* of Senior Peer Counselors
  - Become a counselor to help senior peers navigate difficult life transitions (must be 55+)
  - Weekly in person visits to help them feel valuable and important
  - Empathetic, reflective, give full attention, ask questions, provide mental listening, and assist in any questions
  - Counselors assist wild mild depressive symptoms
  - Focus shifts from what they cannot do to what then can do

**Steven Willey:** Director of Volunteer and Community Education, Wilshire Community Services

- Have the courage to care!
- Caring Callers
  - More social
  - Connection through a phone call, an errand, a small visit
- Loan Closet Associate
  - Associate accepts donations, sanitizes & checks-out equipment & answers phone

**Paul Worsham:** Chairman of the Board of San Luis Obispo Veteran's Services Collaborative

- *Veterans Suicide Prevention*
  - *Numbers of Veteran suicides have been trending down county and national wide*
- Community level efforts have been positive
- Effective outreach in the community

**Mike Bossenberry**

- Medical technology has improved to help veterans survive severe or traumatic injuries and lifelong challenges

**New Applicants for Membership**

- Introduced Susannah Fenton new rep for AAA
- Introduced and voted unanimously in favor of Alternate Member at Large applicant Claryce Knupper

### **Reports:**

#### **ASPC**

- Last month's presenter was SLOLAF
- Suggested a report of COA in the ASPC meetings should be given – Jerry Mihaic offered to fill that need

#### **AAA**

Susannah Fenton

- New Executive Director Brian Weaver
- Medicare opened enrollment is happening October 15<sup>th</sup>
- Senior Connection Program
  - Is a specialized information and referral service for senior individuals and their caregivers
  - Senior Info Line
  - Senior Resource Directory
  - Lists of Home Care businesses, Residential Care Facilities, Senior Housing options and more
  - Online Resource Directory
  - Community Education and Outreach
  - Call (800) 510-2020 or (805) 928-2552 Monday through Friday 8AM-5PM
  - San Luis Obispo and Santa Barbara Counties

#### **Scam Report**

Jessica Yates

- Seeing a lot of phone calls from “family members” asking for money for certain situation
- Use or pick a “safe word”
- Seeing scams in emails

#### **Legislation Report**

N/A

**Next Meeting: October 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2024 at Conference Room #101, 3433 South Higuera, San Luis Obispo, CA 93401** Minutes submitted by Gabriela Garcia. Reviewed by Co-Chair MZ





## **Older Adult Suicide Prevention**

**Brita Connelly, Suicide Prevention Coordinator**  
**Behavioral Health Department**

# Overview

- Suicide data for senior/older adults
- Suicide & Stigma
- Risk factors for suicide in seniors/older adults
- Warning Signs
- How/when to reach out
- Local support



# Accurate Language & Concepts About Suicide

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- **Suicidal Ideation** – Thinking about, considering, or making a plan to die by suicide. Can be passive or active.



## A few facts...

- In 2020, an estimated 12.2 million American adults seriously thought about suicide, 3.2 million planned a suicide attempt, and 1.2 million attempted suicide
- There is no *single* cause of suicide
- Suicide attempts tend to be more lethal in older adults due to:
  - Careful planning & lethal methods
  - Other health issues
  - Less likely to be discovered and rescued



# 10 Leading Causes of Death, United States 2016, All Races, Both Sexes

		Age groups						
		10-14	15-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+
Ranking	1	Unintentional Injury 847	Unintentional Injury 13,895	Unintentional Injury 23,984	Unintentional Injury 20,975	Malignant Neoplasms 41,291	Malignant Neoplasms 116,364	Heart Disease 507,118
	2	Suicide 436	Suicide 5,723	Suicide 7,366	Malignant Neoplasms 10,903	Heart Disease 34,027	Heart Disease 78,610	Malignant Neoplasms 422,927
	3	Malignant Neoplasms 431	Homicide 5,172	Homicide 5,376	Heart Disease 10,477	Unintentional Injury 23,377	Unintentional Injury 21,860	Chronic Lower Respiratory Disease 131,002
	4	Homicide 147	Malignant Neoplasms 1,431	Malignant Neoplasms 3,791	Suicide 7,030	Suicide 8,437	Chronic Lower Respiratory Disease 17,810	Cerebrovascular 121,630
	5	Congenital Anomalies 146	Heart Disease 949	Heart Disease 3,445	Homicide 3,369	Liver Disease 8,364	Diabetes Mellitus 14,251	Alzheimer's Disease 114,883
	6	Heart Disease 111	Congenital Anomalies 388	Liver Disease 925	Liver Disease 2,851	Diabetes Mellitus 6,267	Liver Disease 13,448	Diabetes Mellitus 56,452
	7	Chronic Lower Respiratory Disease 75	Diabetes Mellitus 211	Diabetes Mellitus 792	Diabetes Mellitus 2,049	Cerebrovascular 5,353	Cerebrovascular 12,310	Unintentional Injury 53,141
	8	Cerebrovascular 50	Chronic Lower Respiratory Disease 206	Cerebrovascular 575	Cerebrovascular 1,851	Chronic Lower Respiratory Disease 4,307	Suicide 7,759	Influenza & Pneumonia 42,479
	9	Influenza & Pneumonia 39	Influenza & Pneumonia 189	HIV 546	HIV 971	Septicemia 2,472	Septicemia 5,941	Nephritis 41,095
	10	Septicemia 31	Complicated Pregnancy 184	Complicated Pregnancy 472	Septicemia 897	Homicide 2,152	Nephritis 5,650	Septicemia 30,405

Source: WISQARS Leading Causes of Death Reports, 1999-2016



# 10 Leading Causes of Death, United States, 2022

	10-14	15-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+
1	Unintentional Injury 926	Unintentional Injury 14,669	Unintentional Injury 33,058	Unintentional Injury 36,972	Malignant Neoplasms 33,363	Malignant Neoplasms 105,133	Heart Disease 567,365
2	Suicide 493	Homicide 6,262	Suicide 8,663	Heart Disease 12,258	Heart Disease 32,298	Heart Disease 85,733	Malignant Neoplasms 452,490
3	Malignant Neoplasms 442	Suicide 6,040	Homicide 6,712	Malignant Neoplasms 11,177	Unintentional Injury 31,394	Unintentional Injury 34,017	Covid-19 146,320
4	Homicide 366	Malignant Neoplasms 1,421	Heart Disease 3,789	Suicide 8,185	Covid-19 9,678	Covid-19 24,252	Cerebrovascular 142,513
5	Congenital Anomalies 205	Heart Disease 848	Malignant Neoplasms 3,641	Liver Disease 5,501	Liver Disease 9,401	Diabetes Mellitus 17,410	Chronic Low. Respiratory Disease 125,803
6	Heart Disease 145	Covid-19 447	Liver Disease 1,786	Homicide 4,765	Suicide 7,781	Chronic Low. Respiratory Disease 17,138	Alzheimer's Disease 118,525
7	Covid-19 69	Congenital Anomalies 412	Covid-19 1,640	Covid-19 3,841	Diabetes Mellitus 7,364	Liver Disease 16,484	Unintentional Injury 72,616
8	Chronic Low. Respiratory Disease 58	Diabetes Mellitus 324	Diabetes Mellitus 1,188	Diabetes Mellitus 2,879	Cerebrovascular 5,563	Cerebrovascular 14,173	Diabetes Mellitus 71,985
9	Cerebrovascular 55	Chronic Low. Respiratory Disease 197	Cerebrovascular 599	Cerebrovascular 2,150	Chronic Low. Respiratory Disease 2,987	Suicide 7,864	Nephritis 47,086
10	Influenza & Pneumonia 54	Influenza & Pneumonia 168	Complicated Pregnancy 591	Nephritis 1,029	Homicide 2,740	Nephritis 6,668	Parkinson's Disease 38,931

Source: CDC



## Older Adult Suicide Circumstances (in participating CalVDRS counties)

### MALES

**50%**

had a contributing  
physical health  
problem

**33%**

had a mental  
health problem

**71%**

had depression

**14%**

had treatment  
for a mental  
health/substance  
abuse problem

**31%**

had a history  
of suicidal  
thoughts or plans

**10%**

had a history of  
suicide attempt

### FEMALES

**60%**

had a contributing  
physical health  
problem

**53%**

had a mental  
health problem

**56%**

had depression

**39%**

had treatment  
for a mental  
health/substance  
abuse problem

**49%**

had a history  
of suicidal  
thoughts or plans

**31%**

had a history of  
suicide attempt



# Suicide & Stigma

- Suicide death is stigmatized across all age groups
  - Often seen as being 'weak'
  - Sometimes seen as the person was 'selfish'
- Older adults were raised in a time where it was still considered a 'sin' and was often considered 'illegal'
- We see higher rates in men than women, why?





# Risk Factors

- Depression & other mental health problems
- Substance use disorder (alcohol & prescription medication)
- Physical illness, disability, and pain (especially if any of these are chronic)
- Social isolation & loneliness
- Loss of a loved one, especially to suicide
- Financial & food insecurity
- Exposure to a traumatic event

# Protective Factors

- Strengthen economic supports
  - Strengthen household financial security
  - Housing stabilization policies
- Strengthen access and delivery of suicide care
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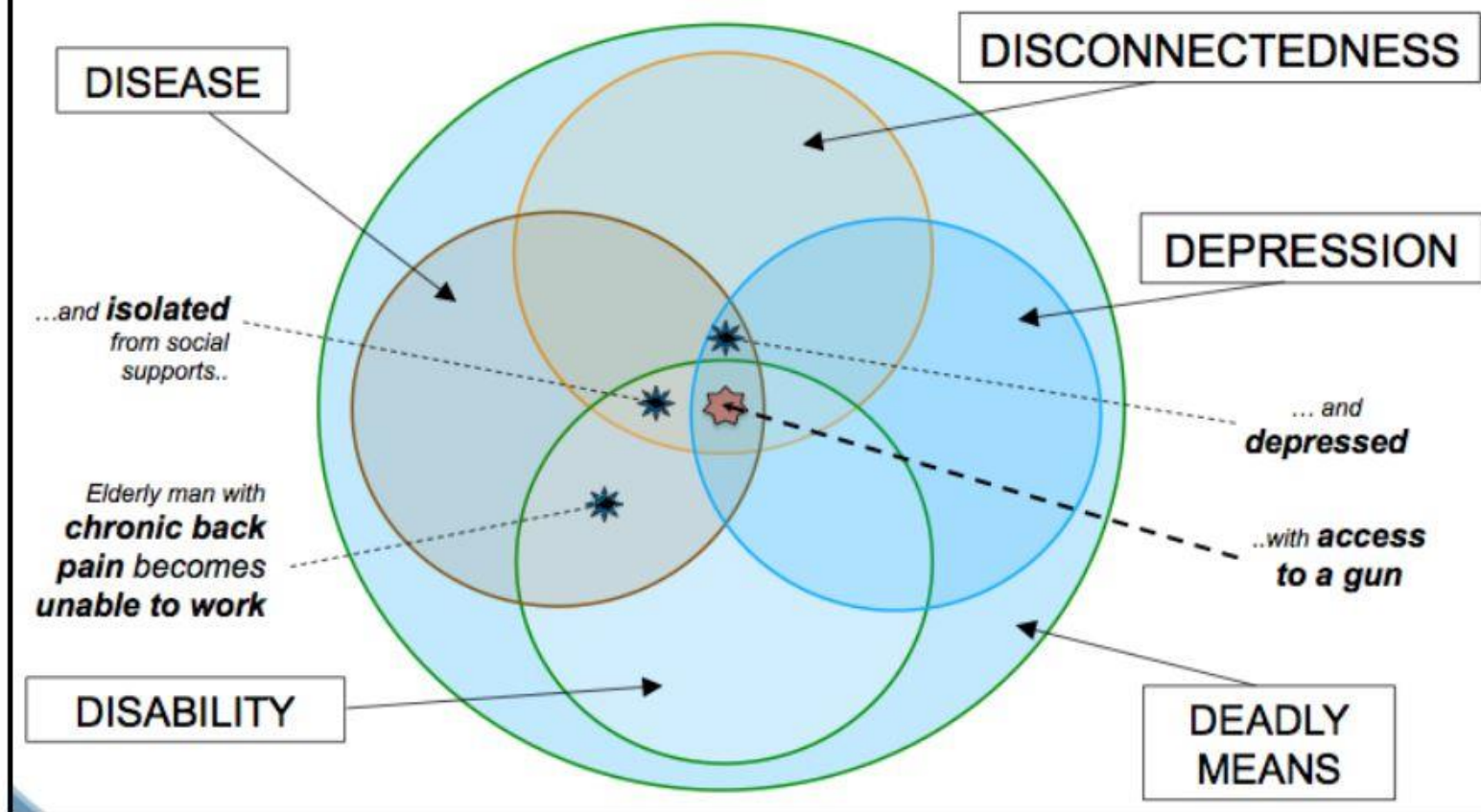


# Protective Factors

- Promote connectedness
  - Peer programs
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- Teach coping and problem-solving skills
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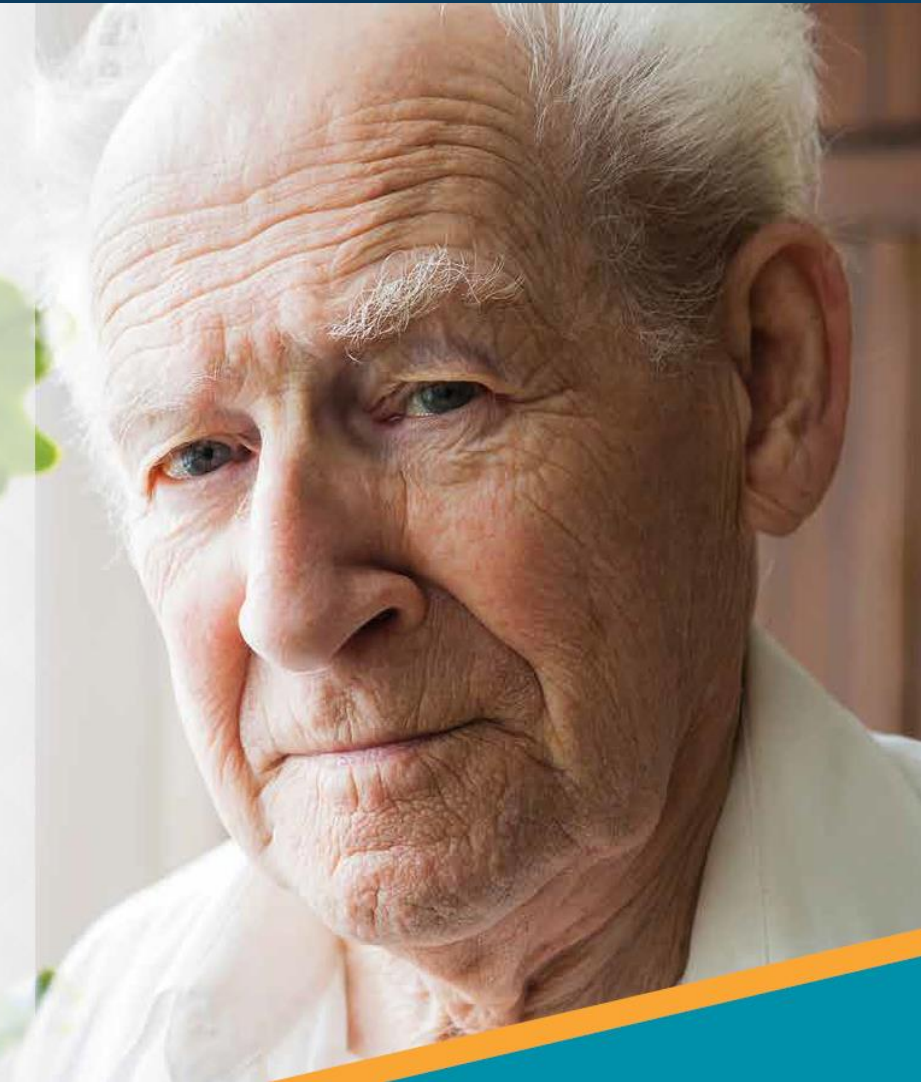


## THE “5 Ds” OF LATE LIFE SUICIDE



**Depression  
is not  
a necessary  
part of aging.**

**suicideispreventable.org**



**COUNTY OF SAN LUIS OBISPO**

[www.slocounty.ca.gov](http://www.slocounty.ca.gov)

# Warning Signs of Suicide

- Talking about wanting to die or about suicide
- Talking about feeling hopeless or having no reason to live
- Looking for ways to kill oneself
- Loss of interest in activities that used to be enjoyable
- Cutting back on self-care and grooming
- Being alone for long periods of time, becoming isolated
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- When combined with other warning signs, giving things away, or making changes in will
- Obtaining lethal means such as firearms or stock-piling medication
- Preoccupation with death or lack of concern about personal safety
- Increased use of alcohol or other substances



# When to reach out...

- If you see one or more of these warning signs, it's time to reach out
- Start the conversation
  - *Mention the warning signs you are noticing*
  - *"I noticed..."*
- Ask about suicide, be direct
  - *"Are you thinking about suicide/killing yourself?"*
- Listen
  - *Express concern, nonverbal communication, reassure*



# Local Support

- County Behavioral Health/Drug & Alcohol Services
- Crisis Stabilization Unit
- Habitat for Humanity
  - Home Preservation Program
    - Low-income senior homeowner repairs
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  - Provides behavioral health services to older adults
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  - Counseling & Therapy
- **Friendship Line 800-971-0016**
- Central Coast Hotline 800-783-0607





# Local Support

- Transitions-Mental Health Association
  - Family Support, Work Programs, Central Coast Hotline, Community Programs, Mental Health Services
- Area Agency on Aging
- Hospice of SLO County
  - Care Management Services, In-Home Support, Grief Counseling, Pet Peace of Mind, & more!





**Thank you!**