

Connecticut Suicide Prevention Conference
Inspiring Hope: Coming Together for Suicide Prevention
May 8, 2025

*****The same workshops will be offered for the morning and afternoon workshop sessions.*****

Workshop 1: Students Leading the Charge: Addressing Mental Health Issues Together

Joel Barlow High School Students
Club Advisors and Joel Barlow High School Social Workers

Caroline Marasco, LCSW
Maryanne Pieratti, MSW

Youth Mental Health First Aid (YMHFA) meets to increase education and awareness of mental health disorders and works to decrease the stigma of mental health disorders. The students plan activities and programs for Joel Barlow High School and the Easton and Redding communities. The programs and activities they plan focus on educating others about the common mental health challenges that adolescents may face, how to assist a young person who may be struggling and knowing when to connect them with an adult or professional assistance.

Workshop 2: From Struggle to Strength: Addressing Suicidal Ideation in the Trans Community and Fostering Hope

Jillian Celentano, LMSW
Author, Advocate
Aurora Psychiatric Associates, Greenwich, CT
Prism Counseling and Support, Killingworth, CT

This workshop addresses the heightened suicide risks faced by transgender and gender-expansive (TGGE) individuals, especially amid ongoing political attacks. It focuses on developing coping skills and resilience when supporting TGGE youth. The presenter will share her personal experiences to help attendees build rapport, trust, and a safe, validating therapeutic environment.

Workshop 3: Finding Your Voice: Storytelling for Personal Growth and Mental Wellness

Matthew Dicks
Author, Award-winning Storyteller

Everyone has a story to tell, but finding the courage, clarity, and confidence to share it can be transformative. In this workshop, bestselling author and master storyteller Matthew Dicks guides participants through the art of storytelling as a tool for personal growth, deeper self-understanding, and improved mental wellness. Through engaging exercises and expert insights, you'll learn how to craft compelling personal narratives that help you process experiences, build emotional resilience, and connect more meaningfully with others.

Workshop 4: Suicide Prevention in the Law Enforcement Community

Sofia Gulino

Lieutenant

Norwalk Police Department

This workshop will look at most recent data regarding trauma that officers are exposed to and its impact. We will look at current trends in community-police relationships and the law enforcement community surrounding mental health and wellness supports, and what obstacles interfere with wellness. This will include a look at future considerations and implications for the field of Law Enforcement.

Workshop 5: Safe Messaging When Reporting on Suicide Loss

Dani Amaral, SERAC, Suicide Prevention Program Lead & Coordinator of Region 3 Suicide Advisory Board

Nicole Bengston, Amplify, Program Manager Suicide Prevention & Coordinator of Region 4 Suicide Advisory Board

Kara Sepulveda-Fonseca, MPH, The Alliance for Prevention & Wellness, Prevention Specialist & Co-Chair of Region 2 Suicide Advisory Board

This workshop will focus on the importance of safe messaging when communicating or reporting on suicide loss in a community, and how our words can be used to promote healing. There will be a focus on best practices associated with developing a safe message as well as bringing an awareness to unintended consequences that populations experiencing inequities may face when reporting or referring to a suicide loss. Participants will learn how to develop and identify safe messages as well as how to advocate for the use of these practices by local media outlets and groups.