

Teen Suicidal Behavior

A Survey of Oregon High School Students, 1997

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Appendix D

Suicide Attempts and Deaths, 1994-1996

In response to elevated suicide rates in the state, the Oregon legislature in 1987 mandated that Oregon hospitals treating a child 17 or younger for injuries resulting from a suicide attempt report the attempt to the Oregon Health Division. Notification to the Adolescent Suicide Attempt Data System (ASADS) is made via a one-page attempt report form, usually completed by emergency department or medical records personnel. The law also requires that the patient be referred for counseling.

During 1994-1996, 2,304 non-fatal suicide attempts were reported for Oregonians 17 or younger, 500 males and 1804 females. The youngest attempter was an 8-year-old boy. During the same time, 71 youth aged 10-17 made a suicide attempt that resulted in death, 51 males and 20 females. The youngest were two 10-year-old boys.

***Guns are used in more
fatal suicide attempts than all
other methods combined.***

"Dont worry about us because we are going to die off any way Dude!"

Although females were much more likely than males to make an attempt, just 1.1% of their attempts were fatal. By comparison, 9.3% of those by males ended in death, reflecting their more frequent use of lethal methods.⁶⁵ Although youth less than 15 years of age were less likely to make an attempt than were those 15 to 17, (832 vs. 1,472 attempts), their attempts were nearly as likely to result in death (2.5% compared to 3.3% of the older teens). Overall, 3.0% of the attempts were fatal.

The most common attempt methods rarely resulted in death (Table D-1). Just 0.1% of the overdoses and 1.0% of the lacerations were fatal. Conversely, 84% of the gunshot wounds ended in death as did 15% of the hangings. These methods were used by just 7.2% of the attempters. Most fatalities resulted from gunshot wounds (68%) and hanging (24%).

Unlike adults, who most often commit suicide during January, youth (younger than 18) most often killed themselves during September, the beginning of the school year.^{8, 66} While one-twelfth of the deaths would be

expected to occur during September, proportionately half-again as many were recorded (8.3% vs. 12.6%). School-aged youth were least likely to commit suicide during the summer months; the average monthly proportion was 5.2%, less than half that seen at the beginning of the school year.

Also unlike adults, who most often committed suicide at the beginning of the work week, adolescents under 18 years of age most often killed themselves midweek (Figure D-1). They were also more likely to end their lives after school, whereas adults more often did so at the beginning of the work day (Table D-2). Most (85%) of the fatal attempts were made in the adolescent's own home or another's home.

A suicide attempt may be triggered by a variety of personal crises. The ASADS report form allows one or more events leading to the attempt to be recorded. Table D-3 lists the most common reasons in rank order. For additional information from the ASADS, see the *Oregon Vital Statistics Annual Report, Volume 2*.