

October 2019

# World Mental Health Day: Gambling Addiction and Suicide Prevention

## Every 40 Seconds, A Life is Lost to Suicide

The World Health Organization (WHO) leads the global recognition of World Mental Health Day each year on October 10th. The impacts of mental health disorders are profound and often misunderstood. According to data from WHO, nearly 800,000 people die around the world from suicide every year – that equates to one life lost every 40 seconds!<sup>1</sup>

Did you know that suicide is the second leading cause of death among those aged 15-29? Suicide isn't just a problem for developing countries. In fact, the United States suffered a rate of 13.9 deaths due to intentional self-harm for 100,000 of population, per the United Health Foundation's 2018 Annual Report. In Florida, the rate was higher, at 14.6 deaths by suicide per 100,000.<sup>2</sup>

Although suicide can affect any member of the population, the data shows that different groups are more heavily impacted than others. For example, the rate for males in Florida is 22.6 per 100,000, well above the average. Similarly, Floridians aged 85+ suffer a staggering rate of 25.4 per 100,000, the highest of any age group.



## Suicidal Ideation Spikes with the Hidden Addiction

Gambling addiction is also known as the hidden addiction, due to the lack of physical symptoms and prevailing stigma that stifles those who need help from seeking it. According to the Florida Council on Compulsive Gambling's 2018-2019 888-ADMIT-IT Helpline report, 23% of problem gamblers and loved ones reported having suicidal ideations. That's more than one out of every five help callers!<sup>3</sup>

While problem gambling may first lead to financial troubles, it doesn't stop there. Those suffering from the hidden addiction often experience anxiety, depression, the loss of meaningful relationships – up to and including divorce – legal troubles, and suicidal ideation.

Gambling addiction is a risk factor for suicidal ideation and likewise does not discriminate. It's best to know the warning signs and risk factors to be proactive in helping yourself or others that may be afflicted. And there's no better time to educate yourself than now.

Familiarizing yourself with the available help is key in being able to respond meaningfully when a gambling problem and/or suicidal ideation may be present in loved ones. Keep Florida's Problem Gambling Helpline, 888-ADMIT-IT (236-4848), in mind.

## #BeThe1To Have the Talk That Makes the Difference

The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline, 1-800-273-TALK (8255), is a national network of local crisis centers that offers free and confidential support to those in need. There are steps that can be taken to communicate with someone who may need help. Studies have shown that having a discussion is beneficial to reducing suicidal thought.<sup>4</sup> Will you #BeThe1To?

Therefore, the first step is to ask someone about what they are thinking and listen to their response. It's important to follow through with these steps and keep someone with these types of thoughts safe by reducing their access to anything they could use to harm themselves. Being there for someone with suicidal thoughts is the next step in the process and is managed simply by being present in their lives and helping them feel connected to others.

This can also be done by sharing resources to help them, for example, if gambling addiction may be a factor, you should provide Florida's 24/7, Confidential, and Multilingual Problem Gambling Helpline: 888-ADMIT-IT (236-4848).

## GET CONNECTED

Florida's Problem Gambling Helpline

 888-ADMIT-IT

 321-978-0555

 [gamblinghelp.org](http://gamblinghelp.org)



# References

1. "Suicide: Facts and Figures." World Health Organization, 28 Aug. 2018, [www.who.int/docs/default-source/mental-health/suicide/infographics-suicide.pdf](http://www.who.int/docs/default-source/mental-health/suicide/infographics-suicide.pdf).
2. "Annual Report: Suicide in Florida." America's Health Rankings, United Health Foundation, 2018, [www.americashealthrankings.org/explore/annual/measure/Suicide/state/FL](http://www.americashealthrankings.org/explore/annual/measure/Suicide/state/FL).
3. 24-Hour Problem Gambling HelpLine Annual Report. The Florida Council on Compulsive Gambling, 2018-2019.
4. #BeThe1To. (2019). How The 5 Steps Can Help Someone Who is Suicidal – #BeThe1To. [online] Available at: <https://www.bethe1to.com/bethe1to-steps-evidence/> [Accessed 9 Sep. 2019].