



MESA COUNTY
PUBLIC HEALTH



2024

MESA COUNTY **SUICIDE REPORT**

DEFINITIONS

Suicide Death is a death caused by injuring oneself with the intent to die.

Suicide Attempt is when someone harms themselves with any intent to end their life, but they do not die as a result of their actions.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

For nearly a decade, Mesa County has worked to address the disproportionately high burden of suicide in the community. Between 2020 and 2024, about 50 residents died by suicide each year, making it the county’s 7th leading cause of death.

Thousands more community members experience suicide attempts and ideation, underscoring the importance of early intervention.

Through the *Mesa County Suicide Prevention Coalition*, prevention efforts are advancing connectedness, safety, and resilience in the community.

Suicidal Ideation, also known as suicidal thought, is thinking about, considering, or planning suicide. It can range from a passing thought to detailed planning.

AGE

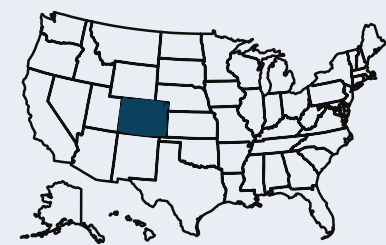
Suicide deaths continue to be highest among working-age adults, a long-standing trend. The fatality rate among youth and young adults has declined in recent years, down to 12.0 per 100,000 compared to an average rate of 19.6 in the preceding decade. However, 35% of suicide-related ED visits came from youth ages 10-24, despite being only 19% of the population.

MEANS

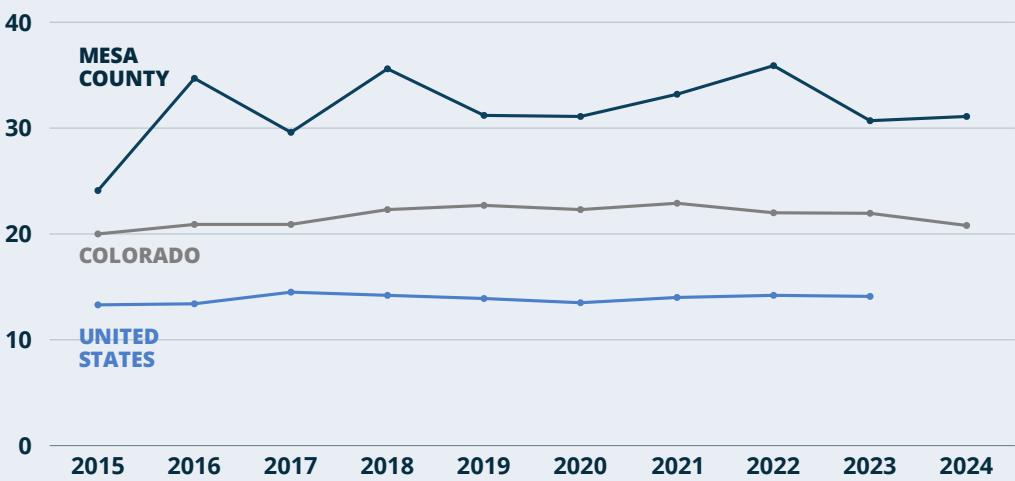
From 2022 to 2024, over half of all suicide deaths in the county involved a firearm. The lethality of firearms makes intervention more difficult, particularly compared to other methods such as overdose or poisoning.

GENDER

In Mesa County, as in Colorado and the US, men account for the majority of suicide deaths. In 2024, the suicide fatality rate among men was over 3 times higher than among women, consistent with historical trends. Women, especially adolescent girls, are more likely to experience suicidal attempts and ideation, leading to a higher representation in suicide-related ED visits.



RATE OF SUICIDE DEATHS PER 100,000 IN MESA COUNTY, COLORADO, AND THE UNITED STATES (2015-2024)



DEATHS BY SUICIDE

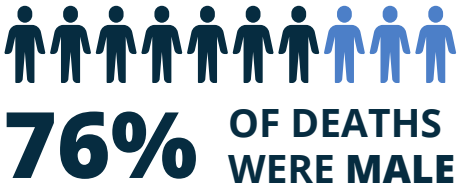
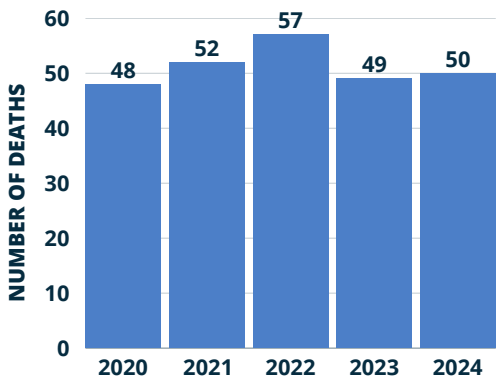
2024 SUICIDE REPORT

For nearly a decade, Mesa County has worked to address the disproportionately high burden of suicide in the community. Among the most devastating aspects of this burden is **suicide death** - defined as a **death caused by intentional, self-inflicted injury**.

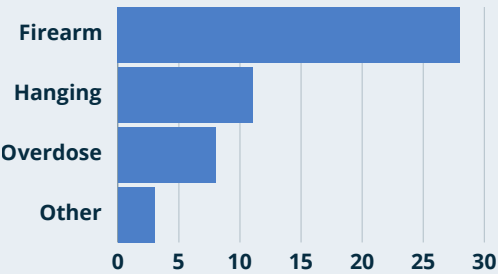
Over the last ten years, an average of 50 Mesa County residents have died by suicide each year. This equates to a rate of about 31.0 per 100,000 residents, significantly higher than the statewide rate of 21.1 and the national rate of 13.9. **Suicide is the 7th leading cause of death in Mesa County**, and the 4th leading cause among residents under 65.

In Mesa County, as in Colorado and the US, men account for the majority of suicide deaths. In 2024, the suicide fatality rate among men was over 3 times higher than among women, consistent with historical trends. For decades, **men have died by suicide at 3 to 4 times the rate of women**. The main reason for this difference is choice in means. Men are significantly more likely to use firearms, which are far more lethal than other means.

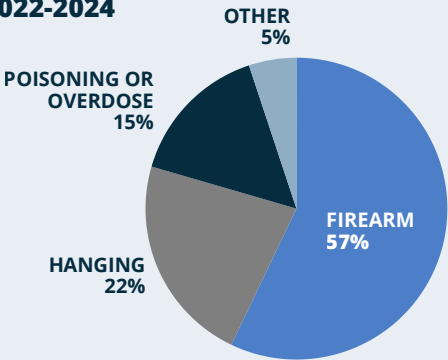
MESA COUNTY SUICIDE DEATHS



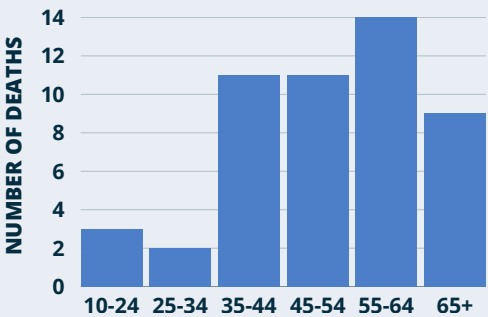
SUICIDE DEATH BY METHOD 2024



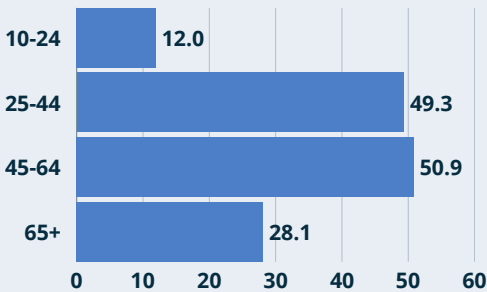
METHOD TRENDS 2022-2024



SUICIDE DEATHS BY AGE 2024



SUICIDE DEATH BY AGE, RATE PER 100,000 IN MESA COUNTY 2022-2024



In 2024, over half of all suicide deaths in the county involved a firearm. The lethality of firearms **makes intervention more difficult**, particularly compared to other methods such as overdose or poisoning.

Suicide deaths continue to be **highest among working-age adults**, a long-standing trend. The fatality rate among youth and young adults has declined in recent years, down to 12.0 per 100,000 compared to an average rate of 19.6 in the preceding decade. While this change may not yet be statistically significant, fewer young lives lost is a hopeful sign and worth celebrating.

DEATHS BY SUICIDE

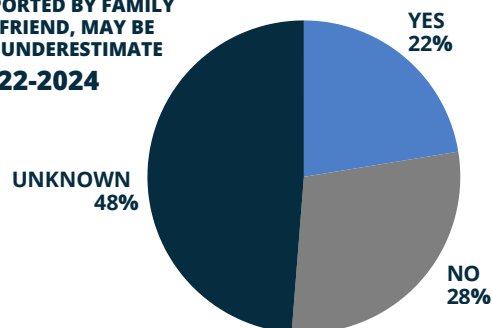
2024 SUICIDE REPORT

Often those who die by suicide **have a history of prior attempts**. From 2022 to 2024, nearly 1 in 4 people who died by suicide had a known history of prior attempts. While a history of suicide attempts is a risk factor for suicide death, the majority of people who survive an attempt do not go on to die by suicide, underscoring the importance of intervention and follow-up care.

Mental health concerns are some of the **most frequently cited stressors** on suicide death reports. From 2022 to 2024, **27%** of those who died had a known history of mental health concerns. By comparison, only **21%** were known to have ever accessed mental health services, and only **11%** within the past year.

PREVIOUS SUICIDE ATTEMPT

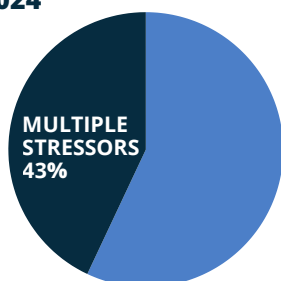
REPORTED BY FAMILY OR FRIEND, MAY BE AN UNDERESTIMATE
2022-2024



ACCESS TO MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES 2022-2024

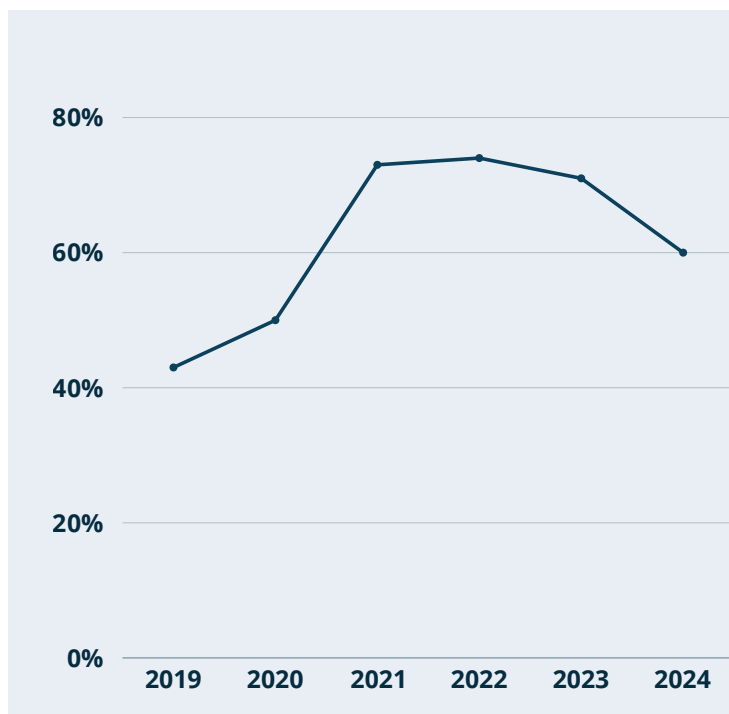


MULTIPLE NON-SUBSTANCE RELATED STRESSORS 2022-2024



TOP 5 STRESSORS 2022-2024

- RELATIONSHIP
- SUBSTANCE MISUSE
- PHYSICAL HEALTH
- MENTAL HEALTH
- FINANCIAL



DRUG OR ALCOHOL INVOLVEMENT AT TIME OF DEATH 2019-2024

IMPACT OF SUBSTANCE USE ON SUICIDE RISK

A history of substance misuse was documented in **43% of suicide deaths between 2022 and 2024**. This refers to ongoing patterns of problematic drug or alcohol use.

Substance involvement was found in **6 out of 10** suicide deaths during the same period. In these cases, alcohol or drugs may have contributed to impaired judgment and increased impulsivity in a moment of crisis.

Substance use often occurs alongside other life challenges. Among those who died by suicide and had a history of misuse, **78% also had other life stressors**, such as relationship conflict, financial strain, or chronic health concerns. Substance use can serve as an unhealthy coping strategy and may intensify the impact of co-occurring stressors.

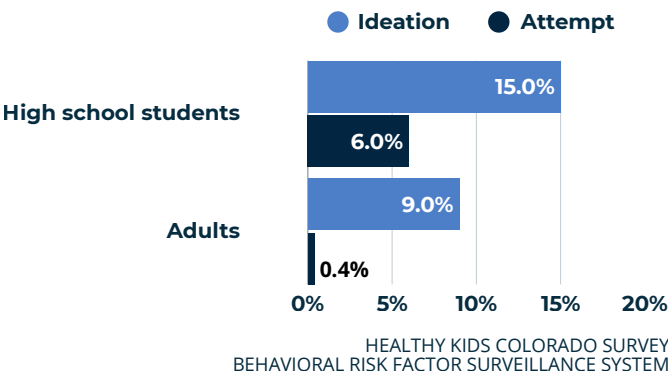
SUICIDE ATTEMPTS

2024 SUICIDE REPORT

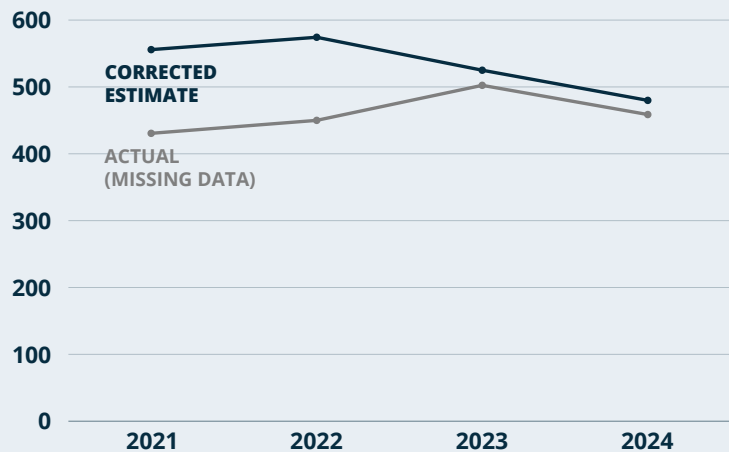
Suicidal ideation, also called suicidal thinking, involves **considering, planning, or thinking** about suicide. These thoughts can range from passive wishing to die to active planning. A suicide attempt occurs when someone harms themselves with the intention to die but does not die as a result.

For each suicide death in Mesa County, another **22 people make a suicide attempt, and another 238 experience ideation without making an attempt**, based on self-reported data. These figures represent thousands of lives in our community touched by suicidality, and also reveal an important opportunity: to understand not only the circumstances surrounding deaths, but also the lives of those who survive a suicide crisis.

SELF-REPORTED SUICIDE ATTEMPT AND IDEATION IN MESA COUNTY 2023

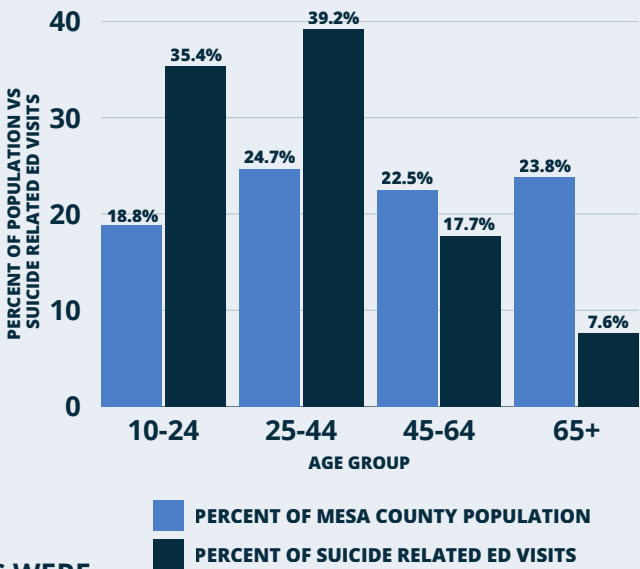


RATE OF SUICIDE-RELATED EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT (ED) VISITS PER 100,000 PEOPLE, MESA COUNTY 2021-2024



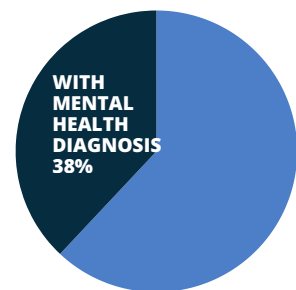
NOT ALL LOCAL HOSPITALS STARTED REPORTING DATA UNTIL 2024. THE CORRECTED ESTIMATE SHOWS OUR CALCULATION FOR WHAT THE RATE LIKELY WAS BASED ON THE ACTUAL DATA AVAILABLE AT THE TIME.

DISPROPORTIONATE REPRESENTATION BY AGE IN SUICIDE-RELATED ED VISITS IN MESA COUNTY 2024

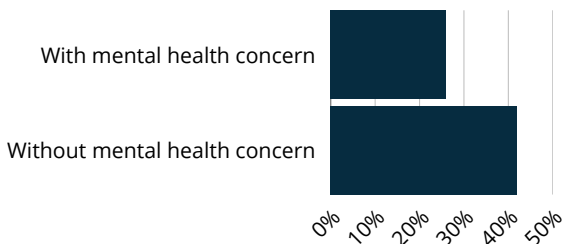


52% OF ED VISITS WERE BY FEMALES

SUICIDE-RELATED ED VISITS WITH CO-OCCURRING MENTAL HEALTH DIAGNOSIS 2024



SUBSTANCE INVOLVEMENT IN SUICIDE-RELATED ED VISITS BY PRESENCE OF MENTAL HEALTH CONCERN 2024



In 2024, only **38%** of suicide-related emergency department visits in Mesa County included a documented mental health concern. Among these visits, **26%** involved alcohol or drug use, compared to **42%** among visits that did not include a mental health diagnosis.

Substances such as **alcohol, stimulants, and sedatives** can heighten impulsivity and reduce inhibition, **increasing the risk** of suicide attempts during periods of acute emotional distress.

DIFFERENCES BY AGE AND GENDER

YOUTH & YOUNG ADULTS (AGES 10-24)

Youth and young adults are disproportionately represented in suicide-related emergency department (ED) visits. While they make up about **one-fifth of the county population, they account for more than a third of suicide-related ED visits**. Although their suicide death rate is lower than other age groups, suicide remains the **second leading cause of death** among Mesa County youth.

Among this age group, there is a pronounced difference by sex: **females account for two-thirds of suicide-related ED visits**. This reflects national trends in which adolescent and young adult females report higher rates of suicidal thoughts and attempts, while males continue to experience higher suicide death rates overall.

WORKING-AGE ADULTS (AGES 25-64)

Working-age adults bear the highest burden of suicide deaths in Mesa County. Between 2022 and 2024, the suicide death rate for this age group was **50.1 per 100,000**, significantly higher than the overall county rate. Men in this group are particularly impacted: **76% of all suicide deaths in 2024 were male**, and men have died by suicide **at more than three times the rate of women** for decades.

While working-age men and women are roughly equally represented in suicide-related ED visits (with men making up just over half), men are far more likely to die by suicide. One contributing factor is method: men are **twice as likely to use a firearm**, which has a much higher lethality rate and leaves less opportunity for intervention.

OLDER ADULTS (AGES 65+)

Older adults have a suicide death rate of **28.1 per 100,000**, lower than that of working-age adults but still significant. Nationally, older adults may face unique risk factors such as chronic illness, pain, isolation, or bereavement. They may also have less frequent contact with behavioral health systems, making risk harder to identify.



VETERANS



In Mesa County, **veterans make up 10% of the adult population** but accounted for **18% of all suicide deaths** over the past decade.

Veterans face unique risk factors, including service-related trauma, difficulty transitioning to civilian life, chronic pain and declines in physical ability, and increased access to unsecured firearms in the home.

Local efforts led by **VA Western Colorado Health Care System** include:

- Active telephone outreach to local Veterans who contact the Veterans Crisis Line.
- Monitoring and offering wraparound care for Veterans flagged at high risk for suicide.

- In-house and community training.
- Participation in community- and Veteran-specific events to raise awareness of suicide prevention and to help Veterans register with the VA if they have not already done so.
- Engagement in the Gun Shop Project, My Reasons for Living Lockbox initiative, and other strategies to help Veterans limit their access to firearms during times of emotional crisis.
- Peer outreach and support across VA and community settings.
- Coalition building to expand outreach to underserved Veterans.
- Offering postvention support for family and friends who have lost a Veteran to suicide.

RACE AND ETHNICITY

National suicide data show disparities across racial and ethnic groups. Suicide rates are highest among **white, American Indian/Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander** populations.

In Mesa County, small population sizes limit the ability to analyze local racial and ethnic disparities with statistical confidence.

However, statewide data from the 2023 Healthy Kids Colorado Survey (HKCS) show that youth of color were more likely to attempt suicide and less likely to have a trusted adult than their white peers.

Studies emphasize that the most effective prevention strategies for communities of color are **culturally responsive and community-led**, drawing on local knowledge and existing strengths.

LGBTQ+ COMMUNITY

LGBTQ+ youth and adults experience disproportionately high rates of suicidal ideation and attempts. Although they represent a relatively small share of the population—**roughly 6% of adults**—they carry a significant portion of the community's overall suicide burden.

According to the 2023 Colorado Health Access Survey (CHAS), **more than half of LGBTQ+ Coloradans** reported poor mental health, compared to **less than one-third of straight and cisgender Coloradans**. The survey also identified higher rates of unfair treatment by medical professionals among LGBTQ+ individuals.

Local youth data reflect similar disparities. In 2023, just 4% of heterosexual, cisgender students in Mesa County reported having made a suicide attempt, compared to 10% of LGB cisgender students and 19% of transgender and nonbinary students.

Nationally, most suicide surveillance systems do not consistently collect data on sexual orientation and gender identity, limiting our understanding of how many LGBTQ+ individuals die by suicide. However, available research confirms **these communities face elevated risk**—underscoring the need for more inclusive data practices and affirming, community-led approaches to prevention.

GEOGRAPHY

Though Mesa County is officially classified as urban, its suicide patterns more closely reflect rural trends: **higher fatality rates, greater firearm involvement, and more limited access to behavioral health resources**.

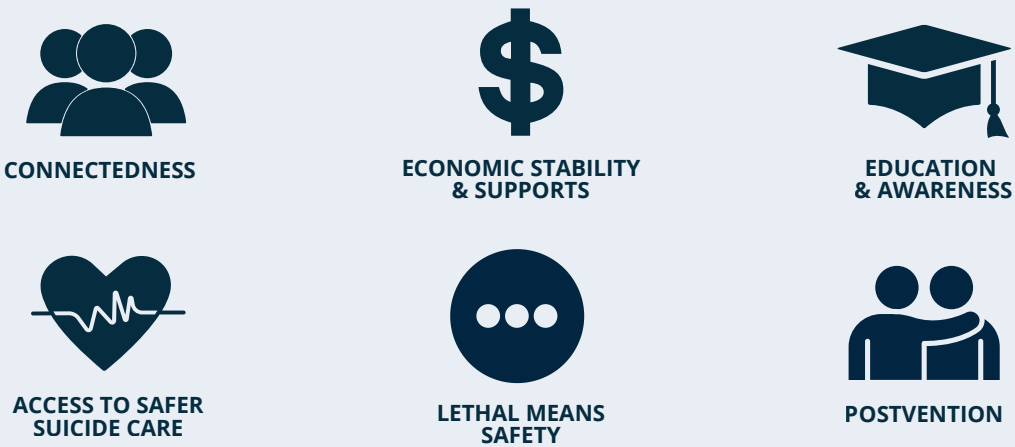
Colorado's Office of Suicide Prevention has identified rural communities as a priority population. Common rural risk factors include **economic instability, isolation, stigma, and lack of privacy** when seeking care. At the same time, tight-knit rural communities often offer strong informal support networks, which can act as protective factors when leveraged effectively.

Addressing these geographic disparities requires bridging the urban-rural divide with strategies such as **mobile crisis response, telehealth expansion, and community-based outreach** in underserved communities.

In Mesa County, suicide prevention is a community-owned goal, a deeply held priority advanced by leaders across every sector. Local efforts are established and coordinated through the **Mesa County Suicide Prevention Coalition**, which works to leverage existing strengths from a wide range of partners, including health and mental health providers, law enforcement and first responders, government agencies, businesses, academic institutions, and nonprofit organizations. This structure ensures that prevention strategies are both **community-led** and **strengths-based**.

The Coalition’s efforts align with the **Six Pillars of Suicide Prevention**, an evidence-informed framework developed by the Colorado National Collaborative. Each pillar represents a critical focus area where targeted, collaborative action can reduce suicide risk and reinforce a more connected, resilient community.

THE SIX PILLARS OF SUICIDE PREVENTION



SUICIDE PREVENTION IN THE MESA COUNTY COMMUNITY



Grand Valley Connects is an enhanced resource navigation program that **assists community members with complex needs**.



Veteran Programs in Mesa County foster **connection and economic stability**.



Gun shops and pawn shops participate in Colorado's Gun Shop Project, **providing information about suicide risk and distributing gun locks to encourage safe storage** of firearms.



Mesa County Libraries **host events related to mental health, grief, resilience and more**, with partners such as HopeWest, Hilltop, and others.



The Behavioral Health Steering Committee **works to address gaps in our mental health care system**.



The Colorado National Monument provides opportunities to increase resiliency and wellness through **educational outreach and programming**.



Mesa County Opioid Response Group partners **provide community trainings and substance abuse recovery support**.



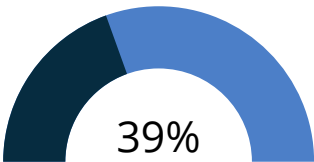
CONNECTEDNESS

Feeling connected to other people, schools, neighborhoods, workplaces, faith communities, and cultural groups **protects people from suicide risk.**

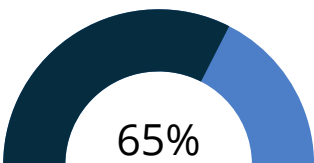
The Mesa County Suicide Prevention Coalition supports school-based social and emotional learning programs, **advises workplaces about policies that help people feel included, and facilitates events and activities across the community.**

INSIGHTS

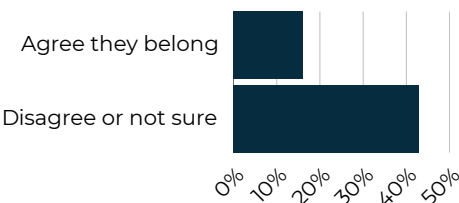
ADULTS WHO FEEL LIKE THEY BELONG IN THEIR COMMUNITY



HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS WHO FEEL LIKE THEY BELONG AT SCHOOL



STUDENTS WITH SERIOUS MENTAL HEALTH CHALLENGES BY SENSE OF BELONGING



Meaningful connection and a sense of belonging are some of the most powerful protective factors against suicide and many other negative health outcomes. In light of this, **rising rates of loneliness and isolation**, affecting people of all ages and backgrounds nationwide, are especially concerning.

In Mesa County, just **65% of high school students** feel like they belong at their school, and only **39% of adults** feel close to people in the area where they live. These numbers indicate a significant portion of residents who, at best, feel uncertain whether they belong. This is similar to statewide trends. **The Colorado Belonging Barometer** reports that only about half of Coloradans (53%) experience belonging in their local communities.

In response to these challenges, there are numerous initiatives actively working to cultivate and reinforce connectedness in Mesa County. The Coalition supports **Sources of Strength** peer networks in School District 51 middle and high schools, aligning with the district's strategic priority to promote student belonging. This program is the first universal intervention shown to reduce suicide mortality among youth.



29% REDUCTION IN NEW ATTEMPTS

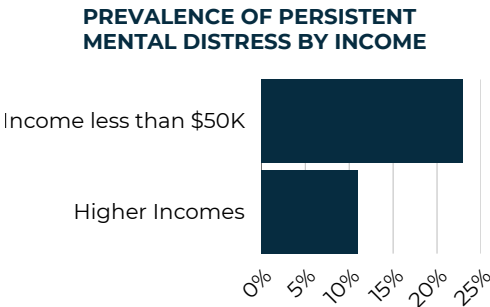
SOURCES OF STRENGTH IS THE FIRST UNIVERSAL INTERVENTION SHOWN TO REDUCE YOUTH SUICIDE MORTALITY. RESEARCH SHOWED A 29% REDUCTION IN NEW SUICIDE ATTEMPTS.



ECONOMIC STABILITY & SUPPORTS

ECONOMIC STABILITY & SUPPORTS

Economic stability increases resilience and reduces financial stress - a risk factor for suicide. Policies and practices for increased food security, affordable housing, family-friendly employment, and access to affordable, quality child care are suicide prevention efforts.



Grand Valley Connects is an enhanced resource navigation program that assists community members with more complex needs.

The program was established by Mesa County Public Health in 2022. In 2024, 900 Mesa County residents were connected to Grand Valley Connects.

The top needs identified are counseling, housing, and benefit enrollment.



EDUCATION & AWARENESS

EDUCATION & AWARENESS

The training and awareness levels of community members and medical providers protects people at risk of suicide by ensuring that when they need help, they get it from knowledgeable and skillful people.

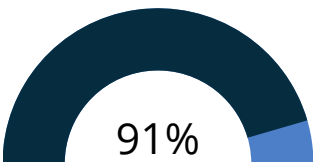
Suicide prevention is not limited to mental health experts. It is a mission anyone can support, and many people are willing to help. In a 2024 survey by **Suicide Prevention Now**, 91% of people said they believe suicide can be prevented, and 95% said they would take action if someone close to them were thinking about suicide.

Equipping community members with the knowledge and confidence to take action is a **vital part of suicide prevention**. The Mesa County Suicide Prevention Coalition offers a variety of free trainings to the community. These include brief one- to two-hour sessions available online or in-person, as well as an in-depth, two-day in-person training.

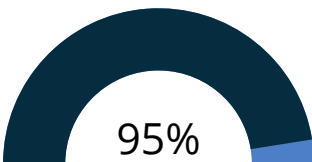
To date, many **thousands of Mesa County residents have been trained**. Each training session increases the likelihood that someone in crisis will encounter someone prepared to help.

The Coalition partners with local media to promote safe messaging, partners with Mesa County Libraries to host events related to mental health, grief, resilience, and collaborates with the Colorado National Monument to build resiliency and wellness through **outreach and educational programming**.

PEOPLE WHO BELIEVE SUICIDE CAN BE PREVENTED



PEOPLE WHO WOULD TAKE ACTION IF SOMEONE CLOSE TO THEM WAS THINKING ABOUT SUICIDE.



ADULTS IN MESA COUNTY WHO HAVE PARTICIPATED IN SUICIDE PREVENTION TRAININGS SINCE 2016



EDUCATION & AWARENESS (CONTINUED)

Education and awareness **empower** community members to recognize warning signs, respond with confidence, and connect people to help.



You could be the difference in the life of someone experiencing a suicidal crisis - your neighbor, your coworker, your child, your friend.

Training is available for free in Mesa County. Options range from one to two hours in person or online or two full-day in person training.

Visit the **Mesa County Suicide Prevention Coalition website** to see current trainings.



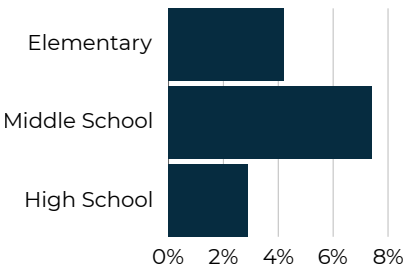
ACCESS TO SAFER SUICIDE CARE

By implementing best practices for safer care, health care systems and organizations will see improvement in quality of patient care and **reduction of suicide risk, attempts, and deaths** for those within their system.

Mesa County’s efforts to reduce suicide through improved access to safer care include initiatives across **health systems, crisis services, and schools, as well as community-led initiatives**. While the CNC’s pillar for access to safer care primarily pertains to suicide crisis response within healthcare systems, local efforts extend this concept to the full continuum of care.

Crisis services are another critical link. **Colorado Mental Health Line 9-8-8** offers 24/7 immediate support via phone, text, or chat for anyone in distress, and **Safe2Tell** is an anonymous tool primarily for students to report anything concerning that might cause harm to themselves or others. Both systems support early intervention and offer confidential, stigma-reducing ways to seek help. **Mesa County had the 6th highest call volume in the state in 9-8-8 usage last year.**

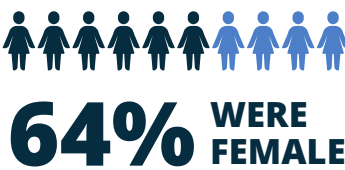
SUICIDE RISK SCREENER PREVALENCE BY SCHOOL LEVEL



GENDER OF SCREENING RATES IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL



GENDER OF SCREENING RATES IN MIDDLE & HIGH SCHOOL





LETHAL MEANS SAFETY

LETHAL MEANS SAFETY

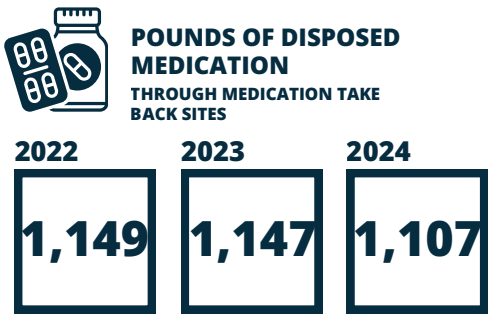
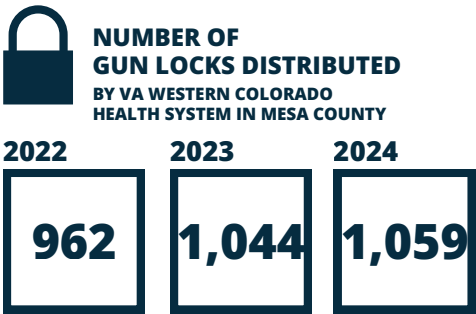
Access to lethal means describes the ability of a person experiencing a suicidal crisis to access the tools required to end their life. Suicide Prevention Mesa County focuses on safe storage of firearms and appropriate storage and disposal of medications to reduce this risk.

Time + Distance = Safety. Differences in regional suicide rates are better explained by levels of household gun ownership than by mental health problems, suicide ideation, or suicide attempt. Half of Mesa County adults report having a firearm in their home, compared to 37% statewide.

The **Suicide Prevention Coalition, VA Western Colorado, and Mesa County Opioid Response Group** work in close partnership to promote safety practices around firearms and medications. This includes distributing gun locks, supporting medication take-back programs, and providing safe storage training for both residents and clinicians.

88%

FROM 2022 TO 2024, 88% OF MESA COUNTY'S 97 FIREARM DEATHS WERE SUICIDE DEATHS.



POSTVENTION

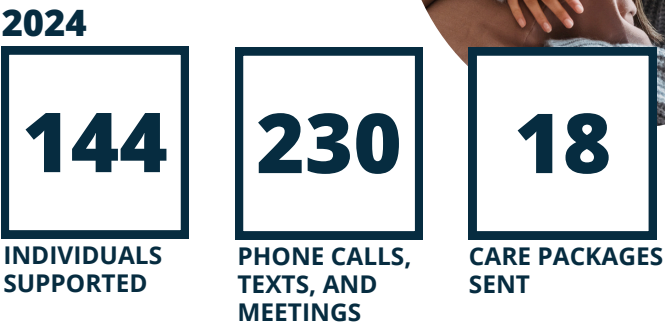
POSTVENTION

A loss of a loved one to suicide is a known risk factor for suicide death. **Postvention is the response to and care for individuals and communities affected by a suicide attempt, crisis, or death.** Examples include safe reporting and messaging about suicide by the media and affected organizations. It also includes caring follow up contacts after a suicide attempt or mental health crisis.

The Suicide Prevention Coalition is developing a **formal community postvention plan** which will outline best practices for responding to a suicide death. The plan is slated for release in 2025 and will guide **timely, robust, and compassionate response to loss.**

Current postvention efforts include options for both individual and collective care. The **Mesa County Coroner's Family Support Coordinator** provides direct outreach to residents recently impacted by suicide loss, offering compassionate communication, care packages, and referrals to bereavement support.

For those seeking longer-term connection and support, **Heartbeat Grand Junction** offers a local support group for survivors of suicide loss, as well as remembrance events that create space to honor loved ones and connect with others.



SUICIDE PREVENTION MESA COUNTY

Suicide Prevention Mesa County (SPMC) is a partnership of professionals, organizations, and community members working on community-based strategies to prevent suicide in Colorado.

Mesa County is a proud participant in the SPMC. SPMC is working to ensure **Mesa County becomes a safer-from-suicide community.**

MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCES



NAVIGATION



FIREARM SAFETY & VETERAN SUPPORT



GRIEF

Heartbeat GJ

Survivors After Suicide Loss



SOURCES

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Healthy Kids Colorado Survey, 2021-2023

Mesa County Community Health Needs Assessment, 2024-2026

Mesa County Coroner's Office, Suicide Death Data

Mesa County Public Health Suicide Attempt Surveillance, 2021-2024

Mesa County Tell Us Survey, 2022

National Syndromic Surveillance Program, 2021-2024

School District 51, 2023-2024

PREVIOUS REPORTS

See previous annual suicide reports on the MCPH Community Reports page. [↗](#)



**MESA COUNTY
PUBLIC HEALTH**

  **SUICIDE PREVENTION**
MESA COUNTY  