

QPR: Ask a Question, Save a Life

Question. Persuade. Refer. = QPR. Knowing these three skills could save a life!

With September being National Suicide Prevention month, I would like to share this: we can all help prevent suicides. We know there are people at risk in our health district of Adams, Clay, Nuckolls and Webster counties in Nebraska. Fortunately, there are some effective ways to make a difference in their lives! One way to make a difference is by learning QPR, which stands for Question. Persuade. Refer.

Is suicide an issue in our area?

Nationally, suicide was the second leading cause of death for people ages 10-14 and 25-34 in 2022. Suicide was among the top 9 leading causes of death for people ages 10-64. (Source: [CDC](#)).

We have concerns in our health district, too:

- 13% of high school students reported a suicide attempt in 2022 (Source: YRBS, 2022)
- The suicide rate among adults in Adams County was higher than the state and the U.S., for the 5-year period 2017 – 2021 (data not available for Clay, Nuckolls, Webster)
- The percentage of adults reporting that their mental health was not good for 14 or more of the past 30 days increased from 13% to 18.5% (Source: BRFSS, 2021, 2022)
- The percent of high school students feeling sad or hopeless is still concerning, but decreased from 35.5% in 2018 to 26.4% in 2022 (Source: YRBS, 2018, 2022)

Who is most at risk?

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention ([CDC](#) for short), suicide and suicidal behavior are influenced by negative conditions in which people live, play, work, and learn. These conditions and factors include discrimination, economic hardship (like high unemployment), poverty, poor access to physical and mental healthcare. Other factors that can increase the risk of suicide include feeling a lack of connectedness to others, experiences of violence such as child abuse and neglect, bullying, and serious health conditions.

And, while anyone can experience suicide risk, some groups experience more of these negative conditions or factors: veterans, tribal populations, people who live in rural areas, workers in certain industries and occupations, sexual and gender minorities, middle-aged adults, and people of color.

What are we doing locally to make a difference?

South Heartland promotes an evidence-based suicide prevention training called QPR (Question. Persuade. Refer.). This training is for all of us – community members and professionals. It is a short training (about 1.5 hours) and it provides skills to help identify and respond to anyone who is exhibiting suicide warning signs and, more generally, anyone experiencing emotional distress.

What would you learn by taking QPR training?

QPR training teaches 3 important skills. Participants will learn how to:

- Question... a person about suicide
- Persuade.... Someone to get help and,
- Refer... someone to the appropriate resource



The QPR training helps create the following links:

- Early recognition of suicide warning signs/distress signals
- Early application of QPR
- Early intervention, e.g., professional screening and assessment
- Early access to competent care providers

You may ask yourself “Why should I get involved in other’s lives... won’t suicidal people reach out on their own?” The answer from professionals is NO, they won’t. According to the QPR Institute guidebook, evidence shows that most suicidal people:

- Tend not to self-refer
- Tend to resist treatment
- Often use drugs and/or alcohol as their psychological pain medication
- Hide their level of despair
- Go undetected
- Go untreated

How can you help?

There are two important ways you can help: (1) know about 988 and (2) learn QPR:

(1) Contact the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline if you are experiencing mental health-related distress or are worried about a loved one who may need crisis support. Here’s how you connect:

- Call or text 988
- Chat at 988lifeline.org

Here’s what to expect: Connecting with 988 Connects you with a trained crisis counselor. 988 is confidential, free, and available every hour of every day. You can learn more about 988 by visiting the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline at 988lifeline.org

(2) Just like CPR (cardio-pulmonary resuscitation), QPR (question, persuade, refer) is an emergency response to someone in crisis and it can save lives.

We encourage as many people as possible to get trained in QPR skills. Let me ask you this: Do you belong to a church or a civic organization? Does your organization serve youth? Are you a business or non-profit that employs or serves at-risk individuals? Are you a healthcare or behavioral health provider whose practice serves at-risk individuals? Does your organization serve veterans and their families?

If you answer yes to any of these questions, consider arranging for QPR training with your group or practice. We can all make a difference in our communities by learning and practicing the QPR skills. More people trained in QPR, means more lives will be saved!

For more information or to arrange for a QPR training for your organization, call South Heartland District Health Department (1-877-238-7595).

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