TDMHSAS and TDH Announce New Campaign to Reduce Drug Overdose and Prevent Suicide

Campaign focuses on increasing resilience between major winter holidays

Wednesday, December 02, 2020 | 03:00pm

NASHVILLE, Tenn. – The Tennessee Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services (TDMHSAS) and Tennessee Department of Health are kicking off a new campaign centered around the risk of drug overdose and suicide during the winter holidays.

The campaign, called ResilienTN, focuses on building resilience and strengthening community connections to prevent the tragic loss of life to overdose and suicide. Behavioral health experts worry the climate around the COVID-19 pandemic may worsen the rise in overdoses traditionally associated with the winter holidays and could also result in increased deaths from suicide.

Through media messaging around overdose and suicide prevention, social media outreach, and virtual trainings and events, the ResilienTN campaign seeks to empower Tennesseans with the tools and knowledge to overcome to the personal challenges they face, watch out for and help those around them, and emerge on the other side stronger than ever.

“Resilience is a key focus of our department’s mission and vision, and it’s an essential part of life during the pandemic. Resilience tells us, ‘I’ve been through tough times before, so I can handle this,’” said TDMHSAS Commissioner Marie Williams, LCSW. “By drawing attention to the tragic loss of life through overdose and suicide in our state, we are hoping to encourage Tennesseans to draw upon the resilience they have inside themselves, their families, workplaces, and communities to prevent another family from feeling that pain.”

“We know many Tennesseans are struggling with the challenges this year has thrown at us, and we want to remind everyone that resources are available to provide support when we or our loved ones need it to keep moving forward,” said Tennessee Health Commissioner Lisa Piercey, MD, MBA, FAAP. “Every death from suicide or overdose is preventable, and we’re proud to join our partners in this important effort to save Tennessee lives.”

Drug overdose deaths have continued to increase in Tennessee, up from 1,818 in 2018 to 2,089 in 2019, a 15% increase. Provisional data suggest that overdose deaths in 2020 are on track to exceed 2019 overdose deaths. Much of the increase in fatal overdoses over the last several years can be attributed to the use of illicit fentanyl and psychostimulants (a category that includes methamphetamine). Nonfatal opioid overdoses, especially among adults age 18-44, have also increased in 2020, peaking during the early months of the COVID-19 pandemic. TDH is continuing to monitor these trends closely and support overdose prevention efforts across the state.

Learn more about COVID-19 and Overdose in TN

In 2018, the most recent full year of statistics , there were 1,159 deaths from suicide in Tennessee resulting in a suicide rate 16% higher than the national rate. Suicide deaths are most common for adults age 25-64, but suicide is now the third leading cause of death for youth and young adults (age 10-24) in Tennessee.

Watch: TDH Suicide Prevention PSA

The month-long ResilienTN campaign features several opportunities for Tennesseans to receive training in overdose reversal and suicide prevention. Additional events focus on addiction recovery efforts on college campuses and suicide prevention among people struggling with substance use. A calendar of events and other resources is available at this link on TNtogether.com .

Anyone needing a referral to addiction treatment services can call or text the Tennessee REDLINE at 800-889-9789. For a mental health crisis or someone considering suicide, call the Statewide Crisis Line at 855-CRISIS-1 (855-247-7471).

About the Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services

Our Mission: Creating collaborative pathways to resiliency, recovery, and independence for Tennesseans living with mental illness and substance use disorders.

Our Vision: A state of resiliency, recovery, and independence in which Tennesseans living with mental illness and substance use disorders thrive.

About the Tennessee Department of Health

The mission of the Tennessee Department of Health is to protect, promote and improve the health and prosperity of people in Tennessee. Learn more about TDH services and programs at www.tn.gov/health.