



Taking action against child suicide

Can you imagine coming home one day and discovering that your child has died? Now imagine what goes through your mind when you learn that they took their own life. You ask yourself, why did this happen? Did I miss something? Is it somehow my fault?

Every parent dreads the possibility of losing a child, but when the cause is suicide the pain is especially agonizing. Childhood is supposed to be a time of wonder and exploration. Our teen years should be filled with the challenges and excitement of finding ourselves and building relationships. But for children from 10 to 18, suicide is now the second leading cause of death, second only to accidents and more than the combined total of children who die from illness.

Here in New Hampshire, the rate of teen suicides is climbing, from 8 per 100,000 adolescents in 2016 to nearly 11 in 2018. This increase is significantly greater than what we see on average in the United States. New Hampshire suicides among individuals under the age of 24 are 50% higher than the national average. And for every successful suicide, there are scores who have attempted suicide, and hundreds who seriously think about taking their own life. How is it possible that in one of the most educated and wealthiest states in the country so many children are suffering?

The answer is complex, but we must look at the cuts that have been made to mental health resources over the past decades, and the lack of affordable mental health and substance use care in our communities. Families struggle to find qualified therapists to help their troubled teens and the cost of obtaining mental health care has increased dramatically.

Maps Counseling Services is taking steps to reduce the rate of child suicides in the Monadnock Region and to bring critical resources to our families. We have raised hundreds of thousands of dollars to build a new mental health clinic in Keene and hire additional child specialists. We have taken an active role in

advocating for increases to Medicaid funding of mental health services, and to streamline the process for experienced therapists from other states to relocate to New Hampshire. We are collaborating with our partner agencies in mental health to battle stigma and to confront child mistreatment, including bullying and sexual harassment in our schools. Our vision is a community where our services are no longer needed, but our mission is to ensure that everyone who needs our help is able to find it, regardless of their income or resources.



There is still a long way to go. The suicide rate in New Hampshire is still spiking, and there are long waiting lists for children who need inpatient psychiatric care. The sexual abuse and harassment of children remains epidemic, and far too many of our children grow up enduring maltreatment that damages their self-worth and leaves them without hope. But together, as a community, we have the ability to turn this around. All it requires is our recognition that this problem is unacceptable, and our agreement that our kids are an investment worth funding. We hope you will join with Maps to address this crisis. Please consider making a gift today and help us reach even more children at risk of suicide.



Maps Counseling Services
23 Central Square, Suite 300
Keene, NH 03431

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Maps Receives Support for Children



Maps Counseling Services is grateful for the support of the Mascoma Savings Bank (pictured here with Sue Silver), the Savings Bank of Walpole, Whitney Brothers Furniture and the Hoffman Foundation who, together, contributed \$4000 for our A-Capella Angels program. Their support made it possible for over sixty underprivileged children and a parent to attend our annual college A-Capella concert at the Colonial Theater on April 6. It is our belief that events like this inspire young children to build strong dreams of who they can be, and give them hope that they can follow their dreams no matter what it takes and where they lead.