



## Hamilton Suicide Prevention Strategy Executive Summary

Suicide is a leading cause of death in Hamilton and claims more lives annually than motor vehicle collisions and homicide. Between 2001 and 2005, there were 222 suicide deaths in Hamilton:<sup>i</sup>

- Almost two times as many deaths by suicide as deaths by motor vehicle collision
- Almost six times as many deaths by suicide as deaths by assault

Death by suicide represents only the “tip of the iceberg” of suicide related suffering. For every death there are an estimated twenty suicide attempts<sup>ii</sup> and many more people who experience thoughts of suicide. Every suicide loss forever changes the lives of those left behind. Although Hamilton has a number of programs and services to prevent suicide, the city needs a coordinated approach to suicide prevention to reduce suffering and increase access to help.

The *Hamilton Suicide Prevention Strategy* was developed using a collaborative approach involving members of the Suicide Prevention Community Council of Hamilton (SPCCH). The SPCCH examined the *Blueprint for a Canadian National Suicide Prevention Strategy*<sup>iii</sup> developed by the Canadian Association for Suicide Prevention and determined that Hamilton needed a suicide prevention strategy. In 2007, the Strategy Committee was formed and later expanded to include representatives from hospitals, school boards and several community agencies.

The **purpose** of the *Hamilton Suicide Prevention Strategy* is to guide the development of an integrated, coordinated, comprehensive suicide prevention approach in the Hamilton community. The **aim** of the strategy is to help prevent deaths due to suicide and reduce the suffering related to suicidal ideation, attempts and those bereaved by suicide.

The **intent** of the strategy is to focus on the following activities in Hamilton:

- Improve coordination of mental health services to promote suicide prevention
- Simplify access to timely and effective help for suicidal individuals in Hamilton
- Provide guidance in identifying specific assessments and interventions that may reduce suicide attempts and deaths
- Increase the percentage of Hamiltonians with the knowledge of the warning signs for suicide to promote earlier intervention
- Increase awareness of the need for postvention care
- Reduce stigma about mental illness and suicide
- Advocate for positive changes to modifiable risk factors

- Develop or improve policies and practices for suicide prevention in businesses and organizations
- Advocate for greater supports and follow-up for individuals with mental health problems

The **objectives** of the strategy are:

- A. Commitment:** To increase community commitment to participate in the *Hamilton Suicide Prevention Strategy*
- B. Awareness:** To increase awareness in every part of our community that suicide is a significant health problem and that it is preventable through community action
- C. Stigma and Discrimination:** To reduce stigma and discrimination associated with suicide and suicidal ideation
- D. Prevention:** To increase community capacity to identify and assist people in all aspects of suicide prevention
- E. Training and Education:** To increase the capacity of the community to identify and respond to risk factors for suicide
- F. Advocacy:** To advocate for community change to improve the care of and responsiveness towards persons affected by suicide behaviours and suicide loss

A *Suicide Prevention Roundtable* will be established to implement these objectives and related actions for suicide prevention.

The *Hamilton Suicide Prevention Strategy* provides a framework to enhance existing community capacity in suicide prevention. We hope it will create a community that is more proactive, aware and skilled in prevention, intervention and postvention activities.

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<sup>i</sup>Source: Deaths, Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care. IntelliHEALTH ONTARIO, October 2009.

<sup>ii</sup>Source: World Health Organization. *Prevention of Suicidal Behaviours: A Task for All*. Available at: [http://www.who.int/mental\\_health/prevention/suicide/background/en/index.html](http://www.who.int/mental_health/prevention/suicide/background/en/index.html). (accessed October 2009)

<sup>iii</sup> *Blueprint for a Canadian National Suicide Prevention Strategy* available at: [www.casp-acps.ca/Publications/BlueprintFINAL.pdf](http://www.casp-acps.ca/Publications/BlueprintFINAL.pdf)

Download the complete *Hamilton Suicide Prevention Strategy* at [www.spcch.org](http://www.spcch.org).