



# Suicide Among College Students

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Each year, hundreds of thousands of new students begin their undergraduate education at colleges

around the United States. For most, their lifestyle changes in many ways. They often meet people who are different from those with whom they went to high school. Competition increases. Those who made perfect grades or were editors of their school newspapers discover that they are no longer unique. Most students find themselves working harder. Some believe that they are the only ones who feel stressed and are working constantly. For a number of these students, every setback is experienced as an extreme failure. Social comparisons leave them feeling inadequate. Some think of suicide.

In response to concern over suicide, many colleges and universities set up programs to help identify and treat those at risk.

Collecting data from mental health centers at over 140 colleges and universities around the United States gives us a picture of who is seeking help. Data from over 80,000 students who went to their local mental health center for all types of distress in 2014 shows that anxiety and depression are the two most common presenting problems. Over 30% of all students in this sample have considered suicide (see *Table 6.7*). However, less than 10% of this group actually attempted suicide (see *Table 6.8*).

In 2013, suicide was the second leading cause of death of Americans in the 15–24 age group. Unintentional injury, such as that arising from an auto accident, was the first. Data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention show an increase in suicide among those in this age group, from 9.6 deaths per 100,000 in 2007 to 11.1 in 2013.

**Thought Question:** What is being done on your campus to identify those with suicidal ideation?

**TABLE 6.7** Students Who Visited Campus Mental Health Center Who Had Seriously Considered Attempting Suicide (How Many Times)

	OVERALL (%) N = 87,383	MALE (%) N = 29,877	FEMALE (%) N = 51,802
Never	69.0	71.4	68.2
1 time	11.5	10.9	11.8
2–3 times	11.0	9.7	11.6
4–5 times	2.2	1.9	2.4
More than 5 times	6.2	6.1	6.1

Source: Center for Collegiate Mental Health. (2016, January). *2015 Annual Report* (Publication No. STA 15-108).

**TABLE 6.8** Students Who Visited Campus Mental Health Center Who Made a Suicide Attempt (How Many Times)

	OVERALL (%) N = 82,249	MALE (%) N = 29,798	FEMALE (%) N = 51,751
Never	91.1	93.0	90.2
1 time	6.0	4.8	6.5
2–3 times	2.3	1.8	2.6
4–5 times	0.3	0.2	0.3
More than 5 times	0.3	0.3	0.3

Source: Center for Collegiate Mental Health. (2016, January). *2015 Annual Report* (Publication No. STA 15-108).