

August 29, 2014

DIRECTIVE:	JOB CORPS INFORMATION NOTICE NO. 14-08
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TO: ALL JOB CORPS NATIONAL OFFICE STAFF
ALL JOB CORPS REGIONAL OFFICE STAFF
ALL JOB CORPS CENTER DIRECTORS
ALL JOB CORPS CENTER OPERATORS
ALL NATIONAL TRAINING AND SUPPORT CONTRACTORS
ALL OUTREACH, ADMISSIONS, AND CTS CONTRACTORS

FROM: LENITA JACOBS-SIMMONS
Acting National Director
Office of Job Corps

SUBJECT: Promoting Student Safety through Suicide Awareness and Prevention

1. Purpose. To promote student safety through the awareness and prevention of suicidal behavior.

2. Background. For youth between ages 10 to 24, suicide is the third-leading cause of death. It results in approximately 4,600 lives lost each year. The top three methods used in suicides of young people include firearm (45 percent), suffocation (40 percent), and poisoning (8 percent). Deaths from youth suicide are only part of the problem, more young people survive suicide attempts than actually die. Each year, approximately 157,000 youth between ages 10 and 24 receive medical care for self-inflicted injuries at emergency departments across the U.S.¹

Suicide affects all youth, but some groups are at higher risk than others. Boys are more likely than girls to die from suicide. Of the reported suicides in the 10 to 24 age group, 81 percent of the deaths were males and 19 percent were females. Girls, however, are more likely to report attempting suicide than boys. Cultural variations in suicide rates also exist, with Native American/Alaskan Native youth having the highest rates of suicide-related fatalities. A nationwide survey of youth in grades 9 through 12 in U.S. public and private schools, found Hispanic youth were more likely to report attempting suicide than their black, white, and non-Hispanic peers.²

During Program Year (PY) 2009 through PY 2013, there were 1,130 suicide-related incidents involving Job Corps students reported through the Job Corps Significant Incident Reporting System (SIRS). In PY 2009, there were 78 suicide attempts, 146 suicide threats, and

¹Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Injury Prevention & Control: Violence Prevention. Accessed on August 6, 2014, http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pub/youth_suicide.html

² Op. Cit.

four suicide deaths. In PY 2010, there were 63 suicide attempts, 148 suicide threats, and one suicide death. In PY 2011, there were 83 suicide attempts, 222 suicide threats, and six suicide deaths. In PY 2012, there were 47 suicide attempts, 154 suicide threats, and three suicide deaths. In PY 2013, there were 59 suicide attempts, 116 suicide threats, and no suicide deaths.

From PY 2009 through PY 2013, 91 percent of all suicide-related incidents occurred on center, with the dormitory being the most common location for occurrences.

Of the 14 suicide deaths that occurred from PY 2009 through PY 2013, seven were by hanging, five were by gunshot wounds, one was drug related, and one was by jumping from a height. Ten of the students were male (six white, three Hispanic/Latino, one black); four of the students were female (two white, one black, one Hispanic/Latina). The average age was 23, and the average length of stay in the program was 173 days, with a range of 11 days to 559 days.

In comparing Job Corps data between PY 2009 through PY 2013, there was a general decrease in the number of suicide-related incidents reported through the SIRS.

Suicide-related Incidents in Job Corps

Comparison of PY 2009 through PY 2013

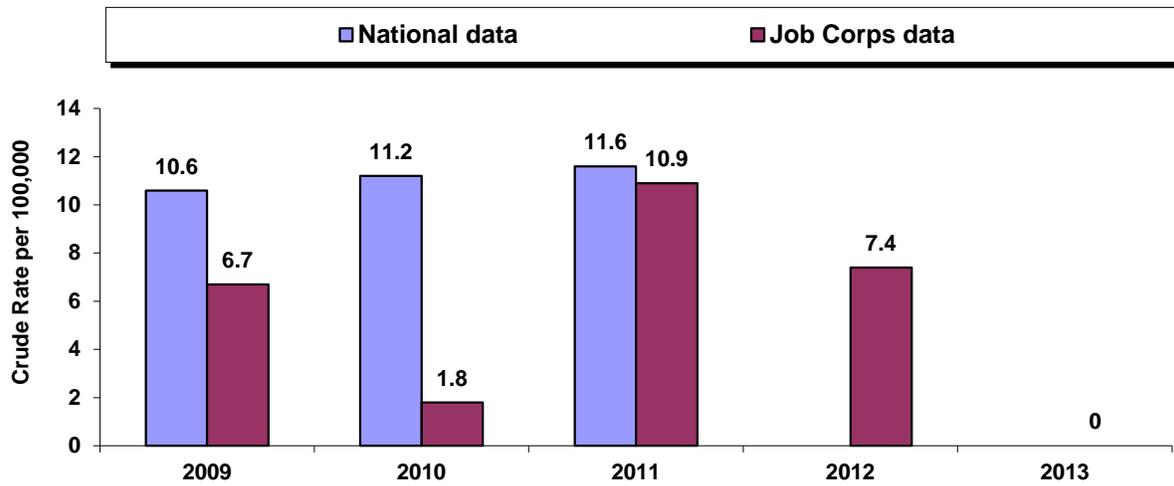
Type of Incident	PY 2009 (7/1/2009 - 6/30/2010)			PY 2010 (7/1/2010 - 6/30/2011)			PY 2011 (7/1/2011 - 6/30/2012)			PY 2012 (7/1/2012 - 6/30/2013)			PY 2013 (7/1/2013 - 6/30/2014)		
	Off Center	On Center	Total												
Suicide Death	1	3	4	0	1	1	4	2	6	2	1	3	0	0	0
Suicide Attempt	14	64	78	14	49	63	8	75	83	7	40	47	8	51	59
Suicide Threat	8	138	146	6	142	148	19	203	222	8	146	154	5	111	116
Total	23	205	228	20	192	212	31	280	311	17	187	204	13	162	175

Job Corps Compared to National Data

Suicide rates in Job Corps are generally well below the national average. In 2011 (the most recent data available), the national rate for suicide for youth ages 16 to 24 was 11.6 per 100,000. During PY 2013, Job Corps' suicide rate was 0 per 100,000 students, and in PY 2012 it was 7.4 per 100,000 students (see graph and table on the following page).

Suicides per 100,000

2009-2013³



Job Corps Suicide Data (ages 16-24)⁴			
Year	# of Incidents	Total Population⁵	Crude Rate⁶
PY 2009	4	59,842	6.7
PY 2010	1	56,202	1.8
PY 2011	6	55,028	10.9
PY 2012	3	40,317	7.4
PY 2013	0	-	0
National Suicide Data (ages 16-24)⁷			
2009	4,167	39,317,025	10.6
2010	4,425	39,383,522	11.2
2011	4,616	39,645,392	11.6

³ Both National and Job Corps Years begin July 1 for non-censal years (2000-20012).

⁴ Job Corps Suicide Data based on # of incidents reported through the Job Corps Significant Incident Reporting System. Retrieved August 14, 2014.

⁵ Job Corps Populations are based on number of student separations per Program Year. National populations are post-censal estimates based on the 2000 census. PY 2013 Total Population not yet available.

⁶ Crude Rate per 100,000 = (number of Incidents/Total Population)*100,000.

⁷ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Web-based Injury Statistics Query and Reporting System (WISQARS) [Online]. (2013). National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, CDC (producer). Available from: <http://webappa.cdc.gov/cgi-bin/broker.exe>

However, even with this low rate, Job Corps centers must continue to identify ways to strengthen our understanding of suicide and suicide prevention efforts. Suicide is a complex behavior usually caused by a combination of factors. In our Job Corps population, the strongest risk factors are depression, bipolar disorder, alcohol and/or other drug use disorders, bullying, and aggressive or disruptive behaviors. Consequently, the recognition of these factors, coupled with appropriate evaluation, is one of the most promising ways to prevent suicide and suicidal behavior on center. One additional area worth mentioning is self-injury. This behavior is generally not a suicide attempt, but can cause accidental death or students who engage in this behavior may become suicidal in the future. The key issue is that there is an underlying emotional issue or mental-health disorder that needs to be addressed.

Some of our students who attempt suicide enter into the Job Corps program and may not reveal a history of mental-health difficulties. However, we are finding that a number of these students have not only significant mental-health histories, but a history of previous suicide attempts. Admissions Counselors (ACs) must pay close attention to gathering accurate information from potential students and, when necessary, securing additional history on applicants from previous mental health providers utilizing the Chronic Care Management Plans (e.g., physicians, clinics, hospitals), employers, schools, family members, etc.

In terms of suicide attempts, the majority of suicide attempts in this age range are expressions of extreme distress that need to be addressed, and should not be viewed as just harmless bids for attention. A suicidal student should not be left alone, and needs to be referred for immediate mental health services.

3. Recommendations. Job Corps and its center staff have been very active in addressing and preventing suicide, which is reflected in the low incidents each year among an age group at great risk for suicide. Policy and Requirements Handbook (PRH) Section 6.8, R3 states that centers shall provide students regular, proactive education on bullying, sexual harassment, appropriate behavior, appropriate staff/student boundaries, and consequences. PRH Section 2.2, R1 (b7) states that centers shall provide new students with an introduction to center life that includes student rights and responsibilities, behavioral standards and expectations, equal opportunity, civil/legal rights, religious rights, sexual harassment, and anti-bullying policies. In addition, there are Information Notices, Program Instruction Notices, online center staff trainings, Web site resources, and presentations available on the Job Corps Health and Wellness Web site regarding suicide awareness and prevention. Also, centers develop Center Operating Procedures (COPs) for responding to suicidal behaviors.

Please refer to the Attachment for specific suggestions to strengthen suicide prevention efforts.

4. Action. Addressees are to ensure this Information Notice is distributed to all appropriate staff, particularly Center Mental Health Consultants, Trainee Employment Assistance Program Specialists, Disability Coordinators, Health and Wellness Managers, and AC.

5. Expiration Date. Until superseded.

6. Inquiries. Inquiries should be directed to Carol Abnathy at (202) 693-3283 or via e-mail at abnathy.carol@dol.gov; or Johnetta Davis at (202) 693-8010 or via e-mail at davis.johnetta@dol.gov.

Attachment

Suggestions to Strengthen Suicide Prevention Efforts