



State Comptroller and Ombudsman
Annual Report 70B | 2020

Implementation of National Suicide Prevention Program - Actions of Government Ministries

Abstract

Implementation of National Suicide Prevention Program - Actions of Government Ministries

Abstract

Background

Suicide and attempted suicide are serious issues in regard to children, adolescents and adults. In December 2013, the Government decided on a national suicide prevention program (hereinafter - the program), with the idea that suicide could and should be prevented. According to the decision, suicide prevention is a national interest that must be achieved in a joint effort by government ministries and local municipalities, led by the Ministry of Health. The decision outlined the organizational, budgetary and professional mechanisms for managing the program and the key actions required for its success.

Key figures

372

The number of suicides per year on average. Between 2013 and 2016, 1,486 people committed suicide in Israel

6,370

The number of suicide attempts per year on average. Between 2013 and 2016, there were 25,480 suicide attempts made in Israel

2

Suicide is the second leading cause of death among youth

2 to 2.5 billion NIS

The annual cost to the Israeli economy as a result of suicide cases

Only about **28%**

Of local authorities run the program (71 out of 255)

13%

The decrease in the rate of suicides from 2012 to 2017 in municipalities which operated the program, compared with a 7% increase in other municipalities


75%

The decrease in the rate of suicide cases from 2006 to 2018 in the IDF since it began to launch a dedicated suicide prevention program








5.4

The number of suicides in Israel in 2016 per 100,000 people according to the World Health Organization. The corresponding figure in the world - 10.5 suicides per 100,000 people

Audit Actions

 From May until October 2019, the State Comptroller's Office examined the preparation and implementation of the government ministries for the program: in the Ministry of Health the management and operation of the organizational and budget infrastructure was examined; in the Ministries of Education, Welfare and Absorption, the way they implemented the components of the program under their responsibility was examined. Supplementary examinations were conducted at the Ministry of Public Security, the Police, the National Council for Prevention of Suicide and the IDF. The audit team also met with nonprofit organizations working in this field and distributed a questionnaire to all educational psychological service managers in the local municipalities.

The Situation Reflected in the Audit Findings






-
- 
-  The Ministry of Health, as the program leader, established a suicide prevention unit and operated on intra-office forums, but it did not regularly convene the steering team and the inter-ministerial team and did not formulate in cooperation with the partnering ministries, a multi-year work plan to run the program. The decisions on the annual work program were made by the Ministry of Health alone without the other partners involved.
 -  The management and utilization of the budget was not regulated for the national program, which was intended for use by all its partners. During the program period, in 2014 - 2019, the Ministry of Health reduced the total budget of the program by 54% of its dedicated budget (from an original budget of NIS 110 million to NIS 51 million). It transferred the budget share that was reduced to the budget of other programs of the Ministry; the Ministry did not meet the budget requirements of the partner ministries.
 -  No measures have yet been completed to reduce the accessibility of weapons to anyone with information about being at risk of suicide - whether they are applying for a license for the first time or applying for a license renewal.
 -  The government ministries that partner in the program have not adopted the subject of suicide prevention as one of the transnational goals of the ministry, and no priority has been given to the subject in the ongoing work of these ministries. The Ministry of Social Affairs and the Ministry of Immigration did not formulate work practices and work plans, did not collect data and did not develop prevention programs with a broad perspective among the populations in their responsibility, who are at risk of suicide.
 -  Since 2016, the Department of Education has stopped conducting investigation committees regarding suicide incidents and suicide attempts by school students.
 -  The Ministry of Health and the partner ministries have not formulated a procedure to ensure the continuity of treatment of the caregivers in a variety of populations who are at risk of suicide and to clarify the responsibilities of each and every authority according to its responsibility - detection, initial assessment and treatment.



The National Council for the Prevention of Suicide works regularly to gather knowledge and expertise on suicide prevention in Israel. The Haifa District has also set up an inter-ministerial forum that includes representatives from the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Welfare and the Health Maintenance Organizations in the district, to bridge the gaps and to cooperate in the treatment of students at risk of suicide.

Since 2006, the IDF has implemented a suicide prevention program. The program significantly reduced the number of suicides among the soldiers.

Main Audit Recommendations

-  Government ministries partnering with the National Suicide Prevention Program must work to regulate collaborations at both the headquarters and in the field, inter alia, by establishing a procedure that will ensure the continuum of care for all populations at risk of suicide.
-  The Ministry of Health should lead a process of producing lessons learned with the partner ministries to examine how the program was implemented. It must also include all the partnering ministries and authorities involved in implementing the program in the local municipalities, given the unique needs and characteristics of each municipality's population and the rate of suicide and suicide attempts in its vicinity.
-  Each of the government ministries participating in the national program must implement its components, adopt suicide prevention as a ministry objective, develop organizational tools to deal with this problem, establish multi-year work programs on the issue, and examine cases of suicide within the population groups under its purview.
-  The Ministry of Health must make sure to utilize the budget allocated to the program for its goals and tasks, which are set for all partners. The Ministry of Health must establish with the Ministry of Finance rules on how to manage and utilize the joint budget. It should also promote the information retrieval processes related to suicide by improving control processes on the quality of data obtained.
-  The Ministry of Public Security and the Ministry of Health must complete the staff work related to preventing possession of weapons by those known as being at risk of suicide.

Summary

Dealing with the topic of suicide is complex and requires collaboration from all partners. In order to work to reduce the rate of suicide as is common in the countries of the world and in the IDF, government ministries must work to coordinate work routines and establish organizational procedures that include work arrangements, reporting deadlines, convening operative forums, budget transfer, and building a dispute resolution mechanism - all this while providing transparency and information transfer between ministries. These actions will ensure a more powerful and effective suicide prevention strategy.

**Number of suicides in Israel, by risk groups,
2010 - 2017**

