A team from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention will arrive in Stark County Monday for a two-week site visit to investigate the high rate of youth suicides in the county.

Federal public health officials will arrive in Stark County Monday to investigate why a dozen Stark County teenagers have died by suicide since August.

Stark County Health Commissioner Kirk Norris and Melanie Amato, spokeswoman for the Ohio Department of Health, confirmed that a team from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention will arrive in Stark County in the afternoon for a two-week site visit. The CDC’s visit was prompted by a request from local and state health officials, they said.

“We do have a high rate of youth suicides right now,” Norris said. “The CDC is coming in and doing an epidemiological investigation and will try to probe what is going on in Stark County and why there’s such a high rate right now with
youth suicides.”

Since Aug. 13, 12 teens living in the Perry, Plain, Jackson, Northwest and Canton Local school districts have died by suicide, prompting local mental health experts to label it a suicide contagion and rattling residents who continue to search for answers as to why the deaths occurred.

Stark County has averaged three youth suicides a year during the previous three years, according to information from the county coroner’s office.

While the CDC may be better known for its investigations of viral or bacterial outbreaks, this is not the first time the federal agency has dispatched a unit to investigate a suicide cluster, which the CDC defines as three or more suicides in close proximity in regards to time and space.

In March 2017, the CDC and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration released a .................. on the agencies’ yearlong investigation into a high number of youth suicide deaths in Santa Clara County, Calif.

In previous years, the federal agency also has investigated suicide clusters in Fairfax County, Va., and two counties in Delaware.

For its report on Santa Clara County – where six youths and young adults in the Palo Alto Unified School District died by suicide during the 2008-09 school year and another four died by suicide in 2014-15 – the CDC and SAMHSA consulted school and community mental health and suicide prevention organizations and studied countywide data of 232 suicides from 2003 to 2015.

The agencies sought to capture trends in youth suicidal behaviors, examine whether media coverage of suicides met guidelines suggested by mental health professionals, compare local youth suicide prevention programs and policies to national recommendations and make suggestions for strategies that could be used by school, community and county officials.

The investigation found that mental health problems, such as depression, anxiety and bipolar disorder, as well as recent crises and problems at school were major factors in the suicides. It also urged those who live or work with youth to be
familiar with signs of mental distress and underscored the importance of having students develop trusted relationships with teachers or adults so they feel more comfortable discussing a suicidal crisis.

Reach Kelli at 330-580-8339 or .......................................................... .

On Twitter: ........................................

Stark County Suicides

Source: Stark County Coroner's Office

Stark County Suicides by Age

2013-2017
CDC to investigate Stark County suicides

- 0-19 Years of Age: 16
- 20-29 Years of Age: 45
- 30-39 Years of Age: 55
- 40-49 Years of Age: 47
- 50-59 Years of Age: 72
- 60-69 Years of Age: 48
- 70-79 Years of Age: 29
- 80-89 Years of Age: 16
- 90+ Years of Age: 5

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