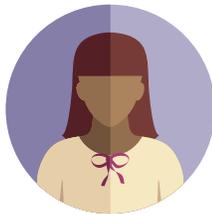




## Planning large group events following a tragedy



### In the aftermath of tragic events,

there is a natural tendency to seek comfort in the presence of others. It can provide us with support at a difficult time and validate that we are not alone in our grief and confusion. There are some things to keep in mind, however, if you are considering planning an event.

The ability to provide support yet maintain control is paramount. Large gatherings can get out of control quickly if they are not carefully structured. It is also important to remember that family members of the deceased may be in the audience, and the message you want to send to the general public is generally not the same message you would give to them. Parents often bring children with them, so there is an added challenge in presenting developmentally appropriate content. Providing an open mic to allow attendees to ask questions can open the door to personal stories that are better communicated one on one as well as frustrated rants by people who do not feel there had been an adequate response. Finally, large gatherings don't provide the opportunity to identify and provide immediate support to attendees who become emotional.

If we take a step back for a moment, there are probably much safer ways to provide support to a grieving community than by hosting a large gathering or meeting. Safety really is the bottom line in any community, but especially one that has been traumatized by the deaths of its youngest members.



### How do you avoid these pitfalls?

Consider a smaller format where it is easier for you to provide control. Make sure to have counselors, who are identified by something like a colored ribbon, visible so attendees can leave during the presentation to get support if they need it. Have counselors stationed at exits approach anyone who seems upset and offer an opportunity for a private conversation.

Think about the reason for the gathering and target the content to achieve your stated goal. For example, if you want to provide guidelines for parents on talking with their children about suicide, provide specific information that helps them do that. Provide handouts since that type of information is difficult to retain.

Be very clear in the invitation that the meeting is for parents and NOT children. Be prepared for children to show up and have an additional venue available where you can provide appropriate information to kids about how they can support themselves and their friends.

Source: Maureen Underwood, LCSW, Underwood & Associates, LLC, February 16, 2018



# ADDITIONAL RESOURCES



## Keep hope alive.

### WARNING SIGNS

Each year in the United States, people of all ages complete suicide. Of these individuals, approximately 80% have given warning signs to their families, friends and neighbors.

- Talking or writing about suicide
- Giving away belongings
- Withdrawing from loved ones and activities
- Feeling hopeless, helpless, worthless
- Seeking ways to suicide, such as guns or pills
- Major eating or sleeping changes
- Increasing use of alcohol or other drugs
- Losing interest in things previously enjoyed

### CRISIS RESOURCES

Suicide can be prevented. Counselors are available 24 hours/7 days a week/365 days a year. If you or someone you know are in crisis, please immediately contact:

- Call **330-452-6000**, the Stark County Crisis Hotline, anytime
- Text **4hope to 741 741**, Crisis Text Line, anytime
- Call **1-800-273-TALK (8255)**, the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline anytime
- Call **9-1-1** if emergency services are needed. If requesting law enforcement, you can ask for a Crisis Intervention Team (CIT)-trained officer.

What can you do about youth suicide prevention? Resources, talking points and shareable downloads are available. Spread the word and begin conversations with young people in your life. Learn more at [StarkMHAR.org/YouthSuicidePrevention](https://StarkMHAR.org/YouthSuicidePrevention)

### MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID TRAINING FOR YOUTH

Youth Mental Health First Aid is designed to teach parents, family members, caregivers, teachers, school staff, peers, neighbors, health and human services workers and other caring citizens how to help an adolescent (age 12-18) who is experiencing a mental health, addiction or crisis.

The course introduces common mental health challenges for youth, reviews typical adolescent development and teaches a 5-step action plan for how to help young people in both crisis and non-crisis situations.

Learn more about upcoming trainings at [StarkMHAR.org/MentalHealthFirstAid](https://StarkMHAR.org/MentalHealthFirstAid)

## StarkMHAR Care Network

Stark County residents can access behavioral health services regardless of their ability to pay through the Stark County Mental Health & Addiction Recovery (StarkMHAR) Care Network. StarkMHAR funded service providers accept various insurance programs, Medicare and Medicaid. Stark residents that are not covered by one of those options can receive services. Their ability to pay for those services will be determined by their income and could be fully subsidized by StarkMHAR. Learn more at [StarkMHAR.org/CareNetwork](https://StarkMHAR.org/CareNetwork)

- Canton Community KidSummit Against Drugs** 330-453-1155
- Child and Adolescent Behavioral Health** 330-454-7917
- Coleman Professional Services** 330-438-2400 (*Teens 16+ yrs*)
- CommQuest Services** 330-455-0374
- Crisis Intervention & Recovery Center** 330-452-9812
- Domestic Violence Project** 330-453-7233
- Foundations, A Place for Education & Recovery** 330-454-2888
- ICAN Housing** 330-455-9100
- Make-A-Way** 330-837-0650
- NAMI Stark County** 330-455-6264
- OhioGuidestone** 440-260-6466
- Stark County TASC** 330-479-1912
- Stark Social Workers Network** 330-455-2260
- Summit Psychological Associates** 330-493-2554

*(Italics indicate StarkMHAR-funded youth treatment.)*