

Suicide is a difficult yet crucial topic to address. With more than 34,000 Americans dying by suicide every year, Blessing Hospital in Quincy decided to tackle the issue by partnering with the nonprofit Transitions of Western Illinois to create the Adams County Suicide Prevention Coalition in 2012.

Staff from the hospital and Transitions run the coalition and lead its volunteers, many who have been impacted by suicide. In Adams County, 26 adults and three teenagers died by suicide between 2015 and 2017.

The coalition aims to prevent suicide through multiple strategies, including:

- Public service announcements on TV and radio;
- A support group for those who've lost a loved one to suicide, which meets monthly at Transitions;
- A website, www.acsuicideprevention.org, that provides information and resources; and
- Presentations on teen depression and suicide at local high schools.

Coalition staff also have visited high school counseling departments to provide suicide prevention resources and best practices. Along with the Mental Health Authority of West Central Illinois Education Committee, the coalition sponsored a free workshop —“Youth Suicide Prevention: Baking Best Practices Into Our System of Care, Our Culture and Our Lives”—which 126 school and mental health professionals attended. The coalition is funded by grants, donations and fundraisers.

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