

Suicide in Alaska:

Data, Research and Community Prevention Strategies

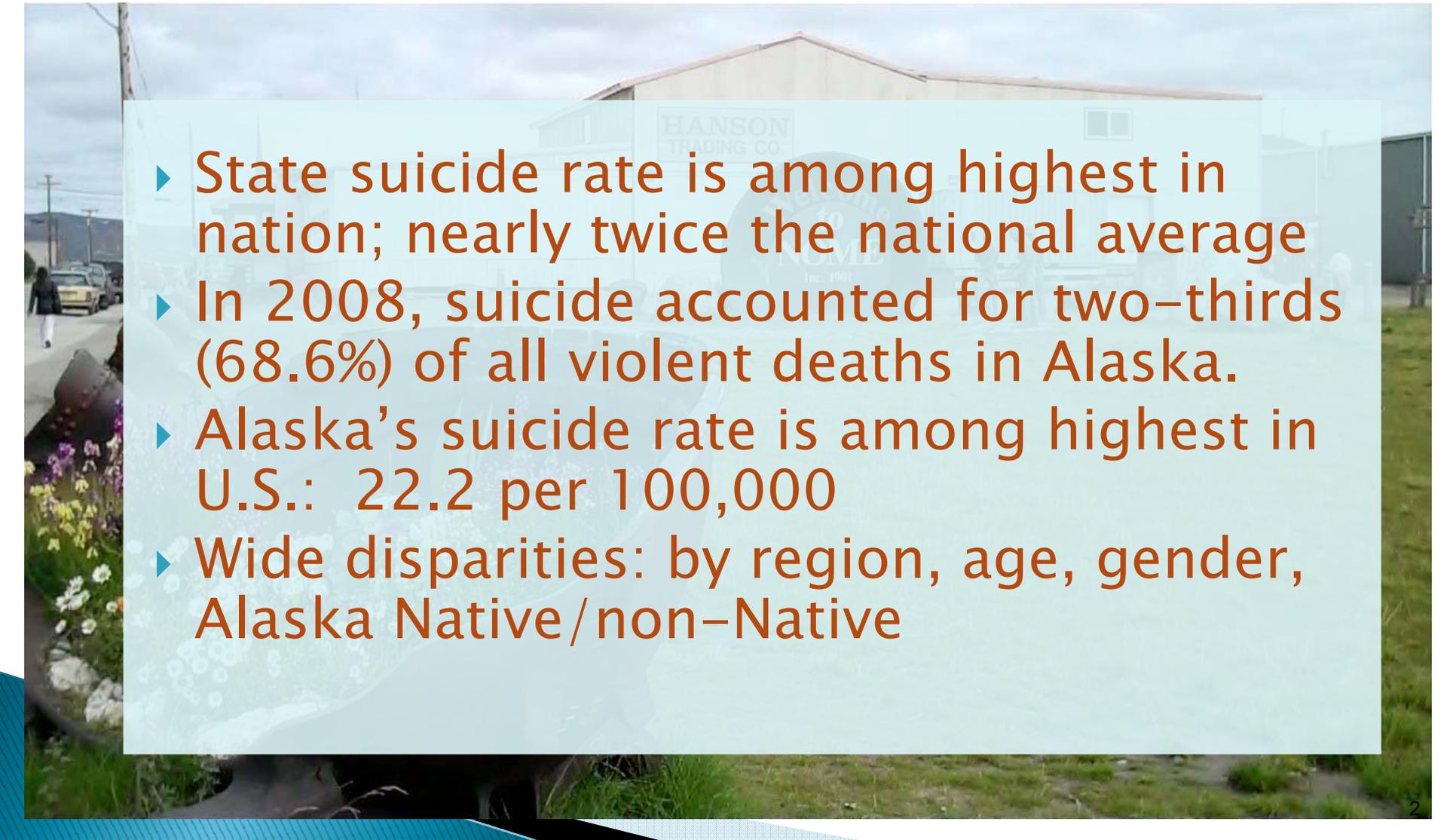


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December, 2009



Alaska overview: Facts

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- ▶ State suicide rate is among highest in nation; nearly twice the national average
 - ▶ In 2008, suicide accounted for two-thirds (68.6%) of all violent deaths in Alaska.
 - ▶ Alaska's suicide rate is among highest in U.S.: 22.2 per 100,000
 - ▶ Wide disparities: by region, age, gender, Alaska Native/non-Native

Regional Rates

SUICIDE RATE PER 100,000

Over 70

Region 02: Northwest Arctic Borough

50-70

Region 03: Nome

Region 04: Wade Hampton, Bethel

30-50

Region 01: North Slope Borough

Less than 30

Region 05: Dillingham,

Bristol Bay Borough,
Lake and Peninsula

Region 06: Kodiak Island Borough

Region 07: Aleutians East Borough,
Aleutians West

Region 08: Matanuska-Susitna Borough,
Municipality of Anchorage,
Kenai Peninsula Borough

Region 09: Valdez-Cordova

Region 10: Yukon-Koyukuk,
Fairbanks North Star Borough,
Southeast Fairbanks,
Denali Borough

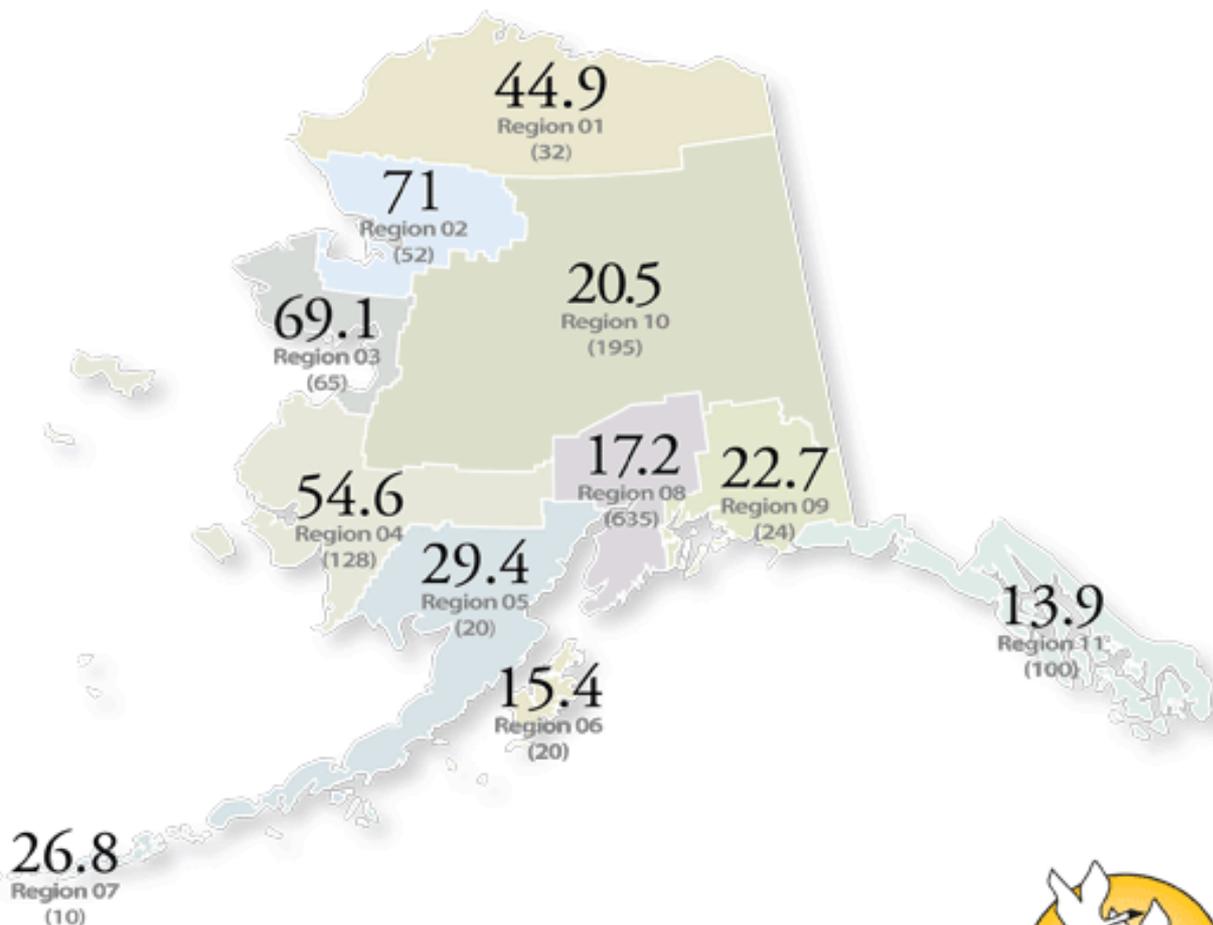
Region 11: Haines Borough,
Juneau Borough,
Ketchikan Gateway Borough,
Sitka Borough,
Wrangell-Petersburg,
Prince of Wales-Outer Ketchikan,
Skagway-Hoonah-Angoon,
Yakutat Borough

Statewide Totals

20.5 RATE PER 100,000

(1281) TOTAL NUMBER OF SUICIDES

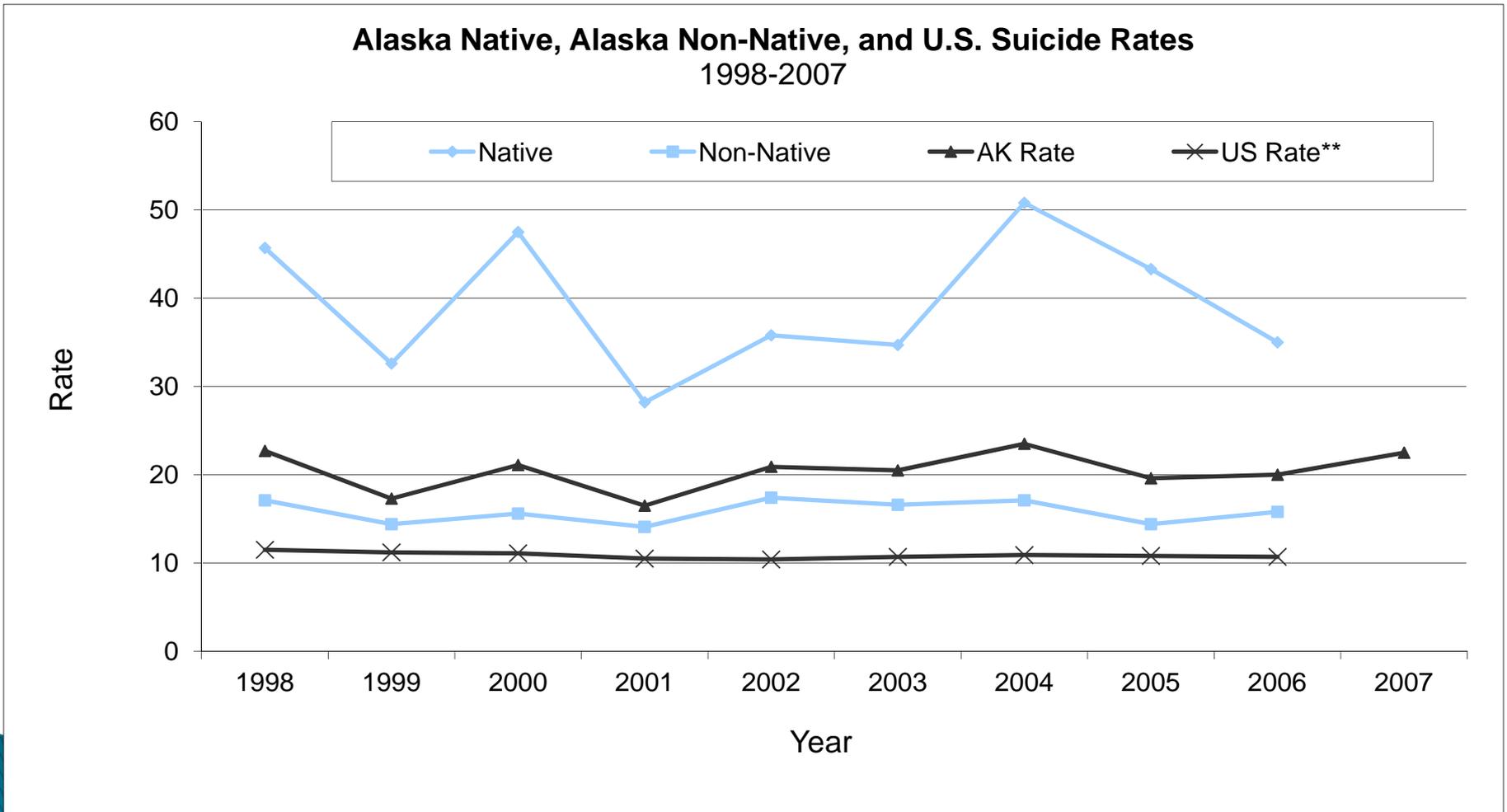
Alaska Suicide Rates and Total Number of Suicides per Region 1998-2007



Statewide Suicide
Prevention Council



What the data tell us...



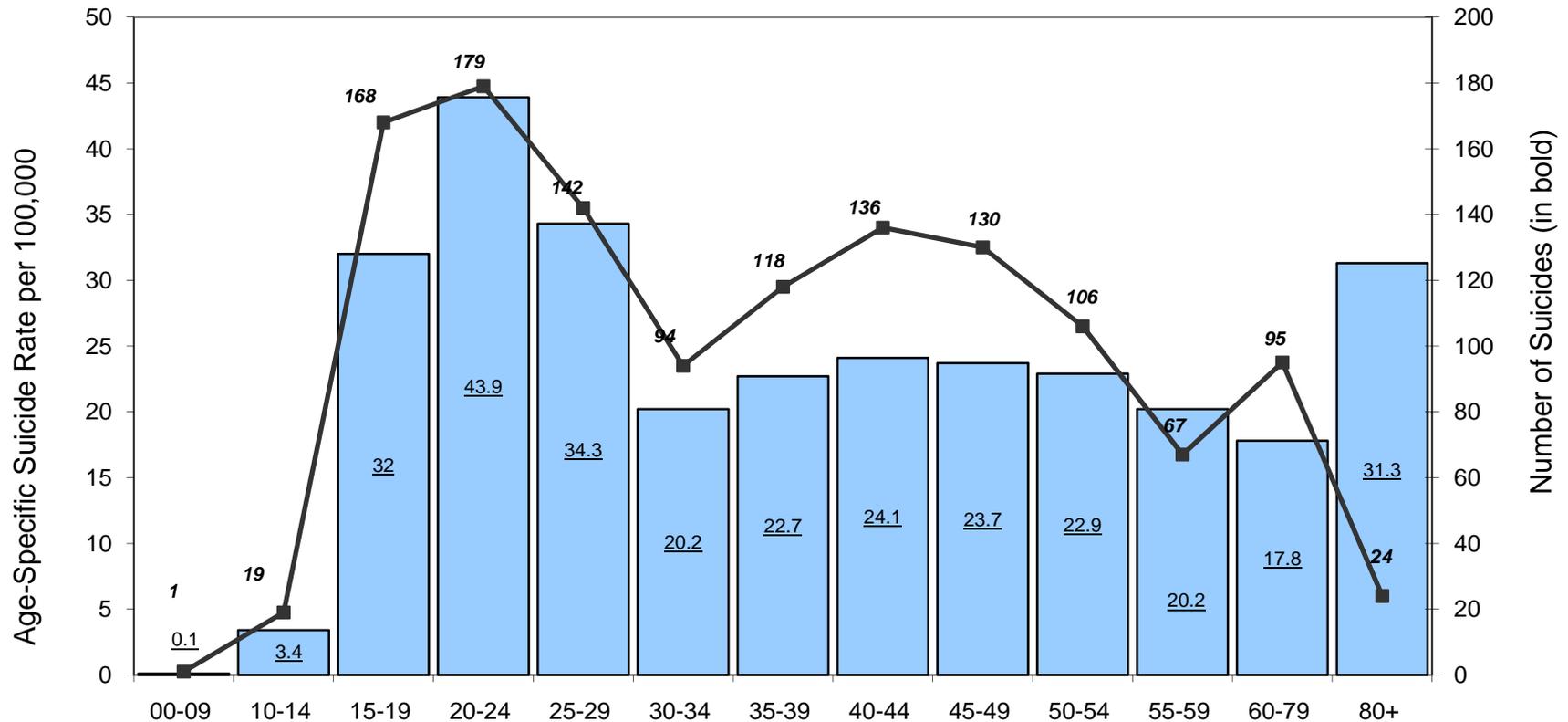


What the Data Tell Us...

- ▶ Highest rates by age: 15–24, 25–29
- ▶ Rate of youth “suicide attempts,” grades 9–12, rising
- ▶ Female youth attempt more often; males complete more often.
- ▶ Alaska Native male teens highest rates
- ▶ Rates also high among oldest Alaskans

What the Data Tell Us...

Alaska Age-Specific Suicide Rates and Numbers
1998-2007





Understanding & applying data

- ▶ In 2007 the Alaska Injury Prevention Center released the *Alaska Suicide Follow Back Study*.
- ▶ Interviews with family and friends of decedents indentified specific factors that influence suicide in Alaska:
 - Post traumatic stress disorder
 - Abused as children
 - Substance use problems
 - Problems with law enforcement
 - Loss of job or unemployed
 - Medical needs not being met
 - Traumatic brain injury
 - Family/relational problems
 - Financial stress
- ▶ *Means Matter* study: guns raise risk



Understanding & applying data

- ▶ Wealth of information directs planning process;
- ▶ We base our strategies on stories the data is telling
- ▶ Directs community planning process

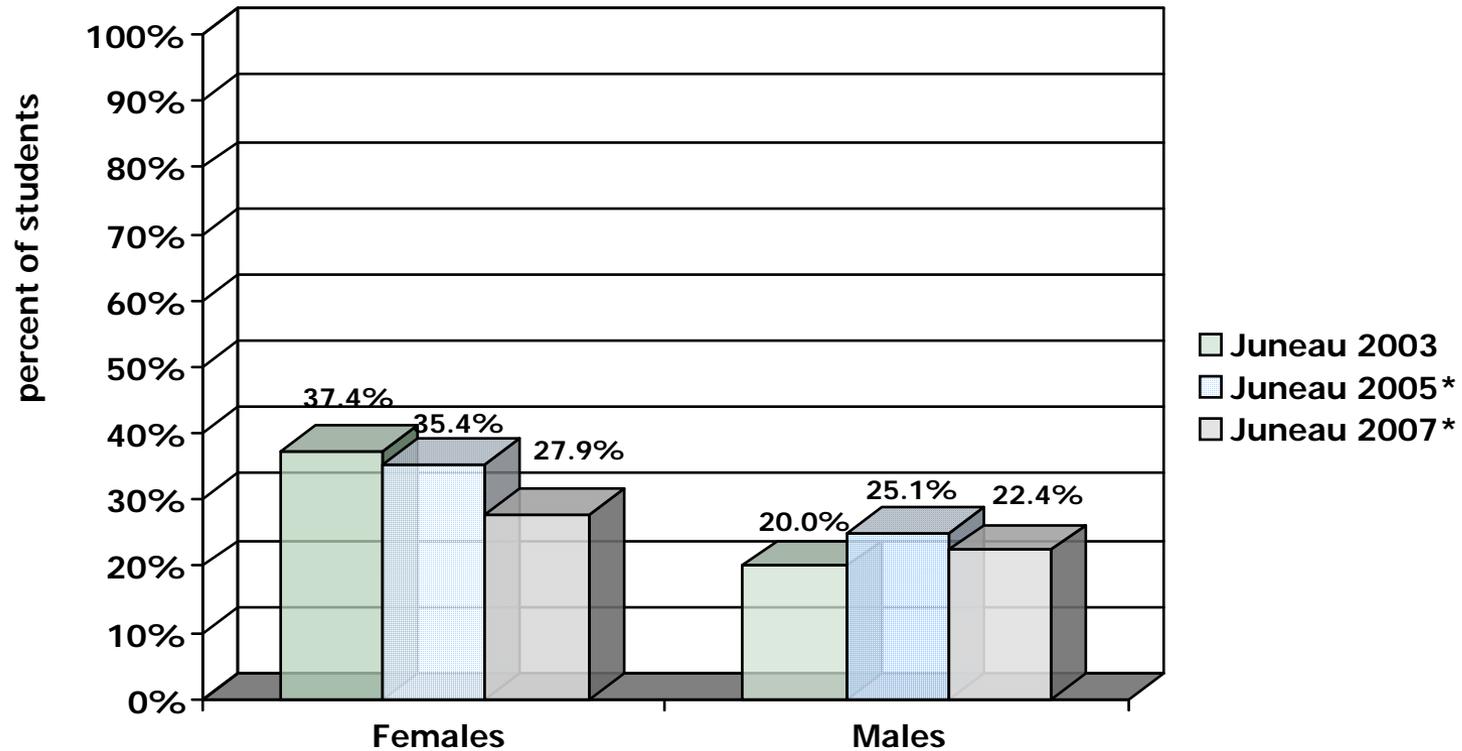


Youth Risk Behavior Survey

Review of data from 2003, 2005 & 2007
Juneau School District

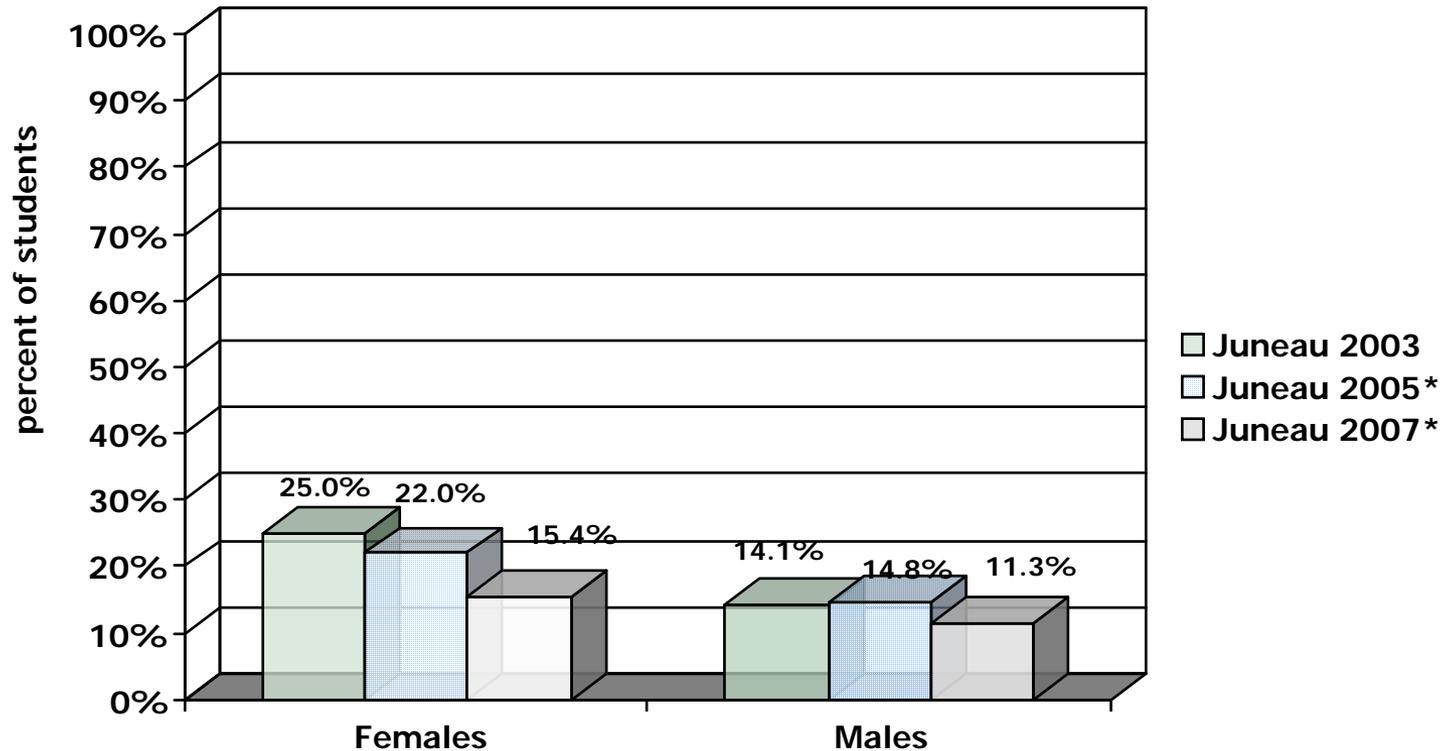
Presented for Juneau Teen Health Center Executive
Committee Planning Session on October 3, 2007

Students who felt sad or hopeless almost every day for two weeks or more in a row – Stopped doing some usual activities during the past 12 months



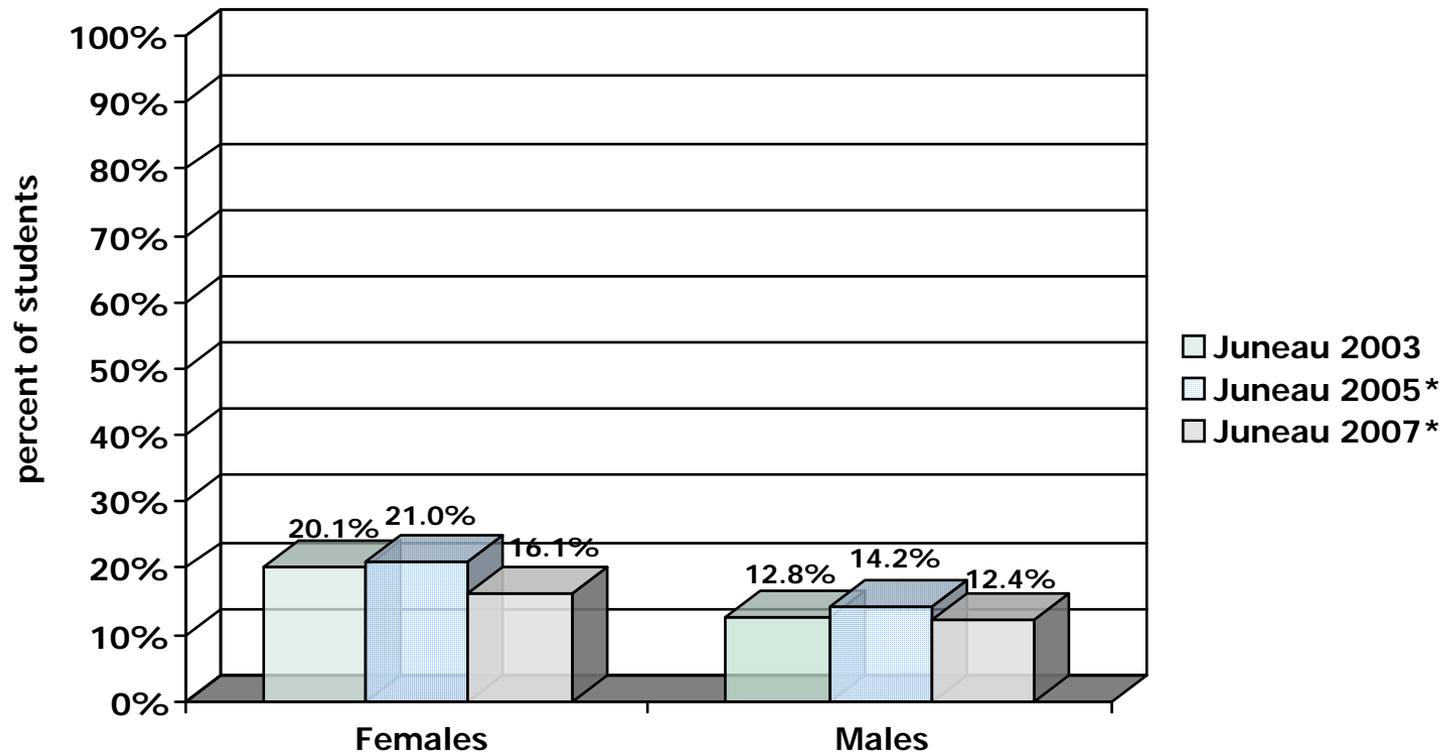
*Of high school students that participated in the survey

Students who seriously considered attempting suicide during the past 12 months



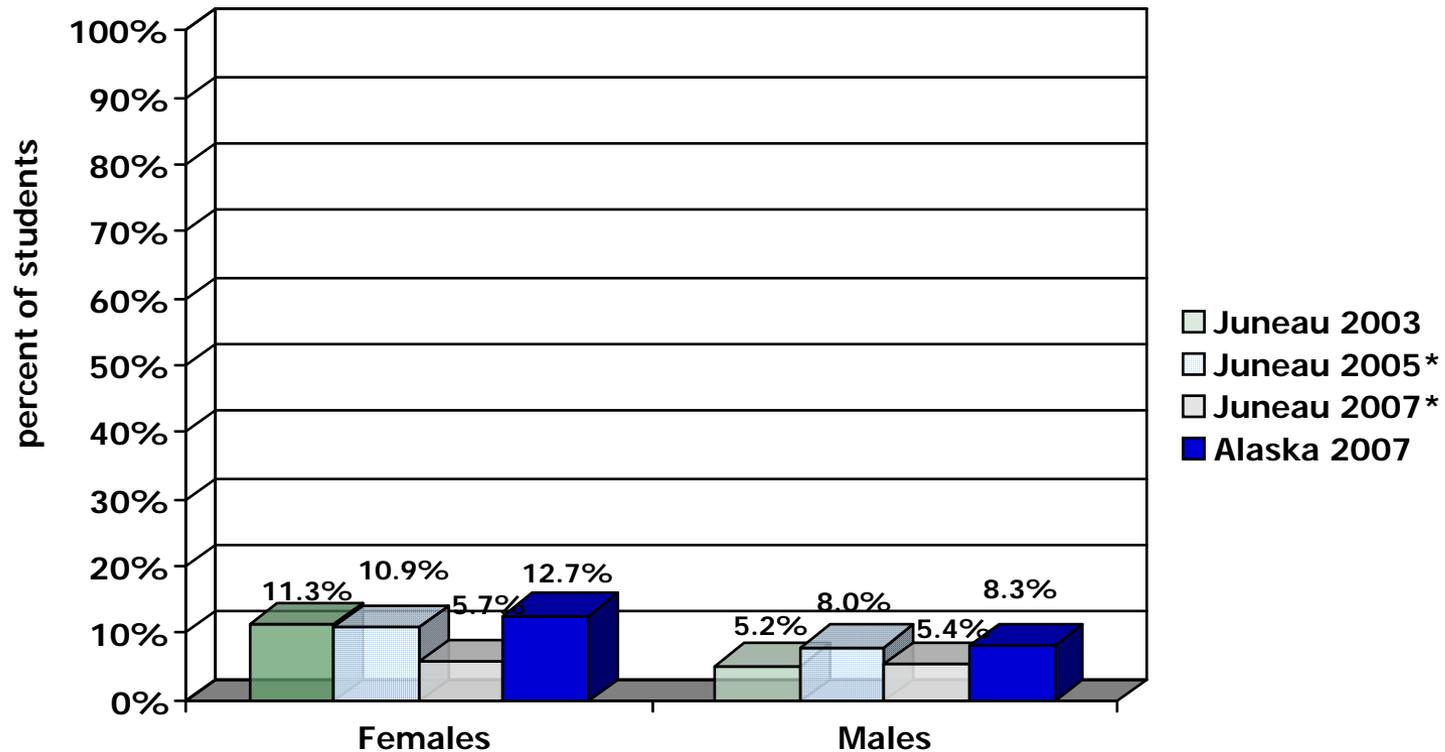
*Of high school students that participated in the survey

Students who made a plan about how they would attempt suicide during the past 12 months



*Of high school students that participated in the survey

Students who attempted suicide one or more times during the past 12 months



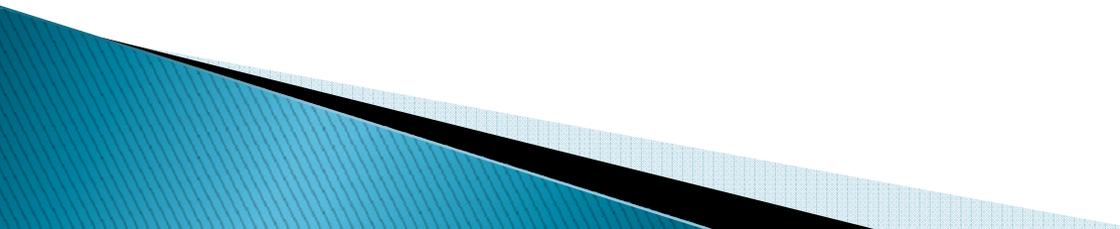
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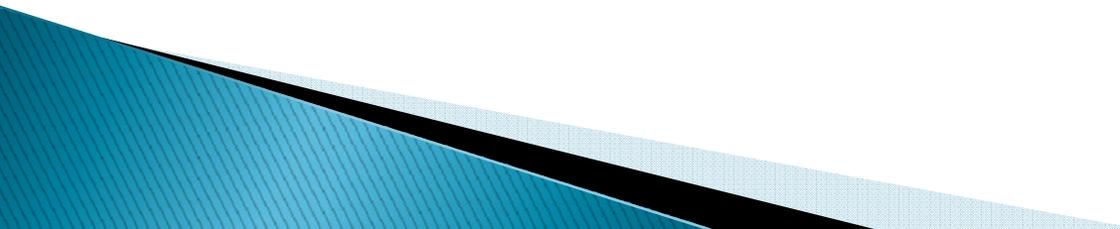
Challenges

- Complexity of problem; so many factors
- No single solution
- Stigma: secrecy; people may not reveal suicidal thoughts, may not be taken seriously (hard to hear)
- Community readiness a factor
- Research is limited, but helpful

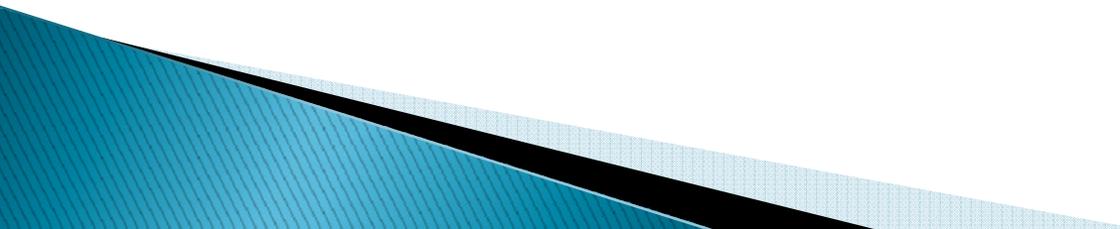
Risk factors for suicide

- Basic characteristics
 - Lifestyle and personal traits
 - Social influences
 - Family dynamics
 - History of trauma/abuse
 - Financial stress/unemployed
 - Psychiatric and medical history
 - Psychological factors
 - Recent physical changes
- 

Warning Signs

- Suicidal thinking
 - History of suicide
 - Closure behaviors
 - Suicide plan
 - Precipitating or triggering factors
- 

Protective factors

- Positive, non-stressful family commitments
 - Effective coping and problem-solving skills
 - Commitment to mental health treatment
 - Meaningful religious or cultural beliefs
 - Strong positive social support
 - Purpose for and joy in living
 - Connection with a meaningful life
- 



Community Planning

- *Local solutions for local challenges* – Building community partnerships is the foundation of regional efforts
- Regional team development: on-going town hall meetings, focus groups, key informant interviews and community readiness assessments; identifies regional, cultural or other factors unique to the region.
- Regional teams customize strategic prevention plans

“Standard intervention protocols are built upon ideas of selfhood, life and suicide that are NOT necessarily shared by Inupiat.”

*– Lisa Wexler, 2006
Studied Inupiat suicide in NW*

Community Planning

- ▶ Beginning the conversation
- ▶ Assessing needs, resources, readiness and capacity (SPF, MAPP)
- ▶ Alaska Suicide Prevention Plan
- ▶ Effective practices
 - NREPP/SPRC
- ▶ Culturally driven approaches
 - Native Aspirations (AILS)
 - People Awakening Project (UAF)
 - ANTHC



Alaska's Community Prevention Strategies

- Statewide network of regional prevention teams, within an overall state plan, will:
 - Act across spectrum:
 - Prevention – Intervention – Postvention
 - Individual – Family – Community
 - Use Strategic Prevention Framework
 - Plan, Organize, Evaluate

Alaska's Community Prevention Strategies

- Garret Lee Smith Memorial Act
 - Alaska Youth Suicide Prevention Project
 - Project Life
 - Bering Strait Youth Suicide Prevention Project
 - Southcentral Foundation
 - 3-year, \$1.5 million for youth suicide prevention
- Indian Health Services
 - Funding for suicide prevention





Alaska's Community Prevention Strategies

- ▶ Statewide programs strengthen, complement local efforts:
 - Careline 24-hour crisis line
 - Video/teleconferenced behavioral health services, trainings
 - “first responder” mental health trainings
 - *Alaska Gatekeeper Suicide Prevention*
 - *ASIST*
 - *Mental Health First Aide*

Next Steps

- ▶ Expand Careline
- ▶ More Gatekeeper trainers
- ▶ Expand online resources: providers and public
- ▶ More research and data surveillance



Contact

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▶ Alaska Department of Health and Social Services

- Behavioral Health, Prevention and Early Intervention Services
- <http://hss.state.ak.us/dbh/prevention/default.htm>