

Suicide Cluster: What to Know

What is a Suicide Cluster?

A suicide cluster is a group of suicides or suicide attempts that occur closer together in time and space than would normally be expected. That space may be geographically or virtually close, such as within an online community or social media group.

The two most common types of suicide clusters are:

- **Point clusters:** A greater-than-expected number of suicides within a time in a specific location. This might be in a school or university.
- **Mass clusters:** A greater-than-expected number of suicides within a time that are spread out geographically. These may be influenced through media coverage.

Common Myths

Myth: Talking about suicide or a suicide cluster will make it worse.

Fact: In reality, talking about suicide opens the door to get help. Talking is a critical first step in de-stigmatizing suicide and letting people know it's okay to share their feelings and reach out for help.

Myth: People who are having suicidal thoughts want to die and can't be stopped.

Fact: Most people who think about suicide don't actually want to die. Instead, they want relief from emotional pain. It's important to remind them that these feelings are temporary, but suicide is permanent.

Myth: Suicide attempts happen without warning.

Fact: Most people talk to someone about suicide before attempting. Loved ones should watch for signs of depression and suicidal ideation including feelings of hopelessness, a lack of interest in activities, writing or drawing about death, dramatic mood changes and giving possessions away. For more warning signs, visit SDSuicidePrevention.org/Get-Help/Warning-Signs/.

Myth: Suicide only affects people living with depression.

Fact: Suicidal ideation can be short-term and situation specific. According to the National Alliance on Mental Illness, about 54% of individuals who died by suicide did not have a diagnosable mental health disorder. Suicidal thoughts are often temporary, and the act of suicide can be impulsive.

Getting Help

It's okay to talk about suicide. The best way we can prevent suicide and promote healing is by sharing resources and support.

- Call, text or chat the 988 Lifeline for free, confidential support with suicidal thoughts, depression or any emotional support. Loved ones can also call 988 for advice and support if they're concerned about someone in their life.
- Visit SDSuicidePrevention.org to find local resources, treatment options and more.

Sources

National Alliance on Mental Illness: Nami.org/Blogs/NAMI-Blog/September-2020/5-Common-Myths-About-Suicide-Debunked
Centers for Disease Control: CDC.gov/Suicide/Resources/sSuicide-Clusters.html