

Project Safety Net

Update on CDC Epi-Aid and Field Visit (February 16-29, 2016)

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) are scheduled to be in Santa Clara County and Palo Alto from February 16-29 to conduct the field work component of what is called an “Epi-Aid” investigation of youth suicide in the county. An Epi-Aid is an investigation of an urgent public health problem in a community or state. An Epi-Aid can occur when the CDC receives a request for assistance from a state public health department to better understand what may be causing a public health problem and what may be some prevention steps that could be taken. The California Department of Public Health (CDPH) requested Epi-Aid assistance from the CDC, on behalf of the Santa Clara County Public Health Department (SCCPHD). An Epi-Aid investigation has three parts, which altogether can span several months: 1) preparation, 2) field work (when the CDC/SAMSHA team comes to Santa Clara County and Palo Alto), and 3) follow-up (continued analyses at the CDC/SAMSHA offices).

The objectives of the Epi-Aid in Santa Clara County will include:

1. Characterize the epidemiology of, and trends in, fatal and non-fatal suicidal behaviors among youth occurring from 2008 through 2015 in Santa Clara County, California.
 - a. Data permitting, compare characteristics at multiple levels, such as school districts and cities.
2. Examine the degree to which media coverage of youth suicides occurring from 2008 through 2015 in Santa Clara County, California, met safe reporting guidelines for suicide.
3. Inventory and compare youth suicide prevention policies, activities, and protocols used in the community to evidence-based and national recommendations.
4. Synthesize information from objectives 1-3 to make recommendations on youth suicide prevention strategies that can be used at the school, city, and county level.

During the field visit, the CDC/SAMHSA will review existing data from a variety of sources, as well as conduct informal meetings to talk with community organizations and groups about suicide prevention strategies being implemented at the county and local levels, and to discuss program feasibility and areas for improvement. SCCPHD is working with the CDC/SAMHSA, Palo Alto Unified School District (PAUSD), the City of Palo Alto, and Project Safety Net representatives to identify these groups. These meetings will be conducted to help the Epi-Aid team understand the local context as well as suicide prevention activities and policies that are currently in place, in order to inform recommendations on how to improve such efforts in the final Epi-Aid report.

The CDC conducted a similar Epi-Aid investigation in 2014 for Fairfax County, VA following a youth suicide cluster. The link to the final report can be found at www.fairfaxcounty.gov/hd/suicide. However, each Epi-Aid investigation is different, depending on the community and the available data.

For more information on this project and on what is included in an “Epi-Aid,” please go to www.psnpalto.com.