ELDER SUICIDE IN NORTH CAROLINA, 2014 - 2018

The North Carolina Violent Death Reporting System (NC-VDRS) is a CDC-funded statewide surveillance system that collects detailed information on deaths that occur in North Carolina resulting from violence: homicide, suicide, unintentional firearm deaths, legal intervention, and deaths for which intent could not be determined. NC-VDRS is a multi-source system that gathers information from death certificates, medical examiner reports, and law enforcement reports. The goal of this system is to aid researchers, legislators, and community interest groups in the development of public health prevention strategies to reduce violent deaths. NC-VDRS began collecting data in January of 2004. This document summarizes deaths among North Carolina residents ages 65 and older completing suicide for the years 2014 - 2018.

• From 2014 to 2018, 1,662 North Carolina residents ages 65 and older died as a result of violence. Of these violent deaths, 1,325 were suicide (79.7%).

• The elder suicide rate was 16.8 suicides per 100,000 persons.

• Eighty-one percent (81.3%) of elder suicides were among males.

• The suicide rate peaked among males 85 and older, and the suicide rate was consistently higher for males compared to females for all age groups.

• Among females, the suicide rate peaked among those ages 65-74.

• Ninety-four (94.3%) percent of elder suicide victims were identified as non-Hispanic (NH) white. The remaining six (5.7%) percent were identified as NH Black, NH Asian, NH American Indian, or Hispanic.

• Overall, the most common method of suicide among elder suicide victims was firearms (78.3%), followed by poisoning (11.6%) and hanging/strangulation/suffocation (6.6%).

• Four percent (3.5%) of suicides were completed using a method other than firearms, poisoning or hanging.
Elder Suicide Circumstances*: NC-VDRS, 2014 - 2018

- N.C. Division of Public Health - N.C. Violent Death Reporting System

- Over one-third (36.3%) of elder male suicide victims with circumstance information were characterized as having a current depressed mood at the time of death compared to 36.3% of females.

- Sixty-three percent (62.5%) of elder female and 43.9% of elder male suicide victims had a current mental health problem when they completed suicide.

- Twenty-four percent (23.6%) of elder females had a history of prior suicide attempts, whereas only 7.7% of elder males had a history of prior suicide attempts.

- Fifty-eight percent (57.7%) of males and 41.8% of females had a physical health problem.

More information on suicide prevention efforts can be found at:

**State Resource Partners**
N.C. Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities and Substance Abuse Services
https://www.ncdhhs.gov/divisions/mhddas

North Carolina Office of the Chief Medical Examiner
https://www.ocme.dhhs.nc.gov/

North Carolina Mental Health, Substance Use, and Aging Coalition
https://www.med.unc.edu/aging/cgec/mental-health/

N.C. Division of Aging and Adult Services
https://www.ncdhhs.gov/divisions/daas

**National Resources**
The Suicide Prevention Resource Center
http://www.sprc.org/

The American Foundation for Suicide Prevention
https://afsp.org/

The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline
(for suicide crisis calls) 1-800-273-8255

* Circumstances are known for 96% males (n=1038) and 96% females (n=237).