

TSPN CALL TO ACTION

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TENNESSEE SUICIDE PREVENTION NETWORK



TSPN CELEBRATES PASSAGE OF JASON FLATT ACT EXPANSION

On March 22, Governor Bill Haslam signed off on the Jason Flatt Act Expansion regarding suicide prevention training requirements for public school staff. The following is a statement from TSPN Executive Director Scott Ridgway regarding this milestone.

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Several months ago, when TSPN received communications from a student from Harpeth High School and a bereaved mother who wanted our support for pending legislation, I could not have guessed it would culminate in Tennessee once again becoming a pioneer in the field of youth suicide prevention.

After the death of Jared Martin (age 17) in 2014, his friend Kelsey Neeley helped establish the Jared's Keepers Foundation and became the group's Director of Student Outreach. She was working with Debby Martin, Jared's mother, Tennessee State Senator Kelly Roberts (R-Springfield), and Tennessee State Rep. Mary Littleton (R-Dickson) about legislation that that would amend the Jason Flatt Act of 2007 to require LEAs in Tennessee to maintain a suicide prevention policy and mandate suicide prevention training for all public school staff.

The bill recently passed and signed into law adds two important provisions to the Jason Flatt Act, effective July 1. It will require each school district to adopt a policy on student suicide prevention, intervention, and postvention, developed in consultation with school and community stakeholders, school-employed mental health professionals, and suicide prevention experts.

Additionally, the law mandates the Tennessee Department of Education to establish a model policy to help school districts create their own policies. This model will be developed in consultation with the Office of Crisis Services and Suicide Prevention of the Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services and the Department of Health.

TSPN worked closely with the Jared's Keepers Foundation, the Jason Foundation, and the Tennessee chapter of the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention to promote this bill within the General Assembly and bring it to Governor Haslam's desk. In the end, the bill cleared the State Senate by unanimous vote, and received only three "nay" votes in the House.



Photo of Jared Martin courtesy of the Jared's Keepers Foundation website.

We wish to thank the aforementioned agencies for their teamwork and support making this bill a reality, our members and advocates for promoting the bill to their representatives in the General Assembly... and perhaps most of all, to Kelsey for taking a horrible personal loss and turning it into something positive, creating a lasting contribution that will save the lives of untold numbers of young people in the years to come.

For more information about the Jared's Keeper's Foundation, see their website at [www.jaredskeepers.com](http://www.jaredskeepers.com). More information about the Jason Foundation is available at [www.jasonfoundation.com](http://www.jasonfoundation.com). AFSP-Tennessee maintains two chapters—one for Memphis/Mid-South (<http://afsp.org/chapter/afsp-memphis-mid-south>) and one for Middle Tennessee chapter (<http://afsp.org/chapter/afsp-middle-tennessee>).

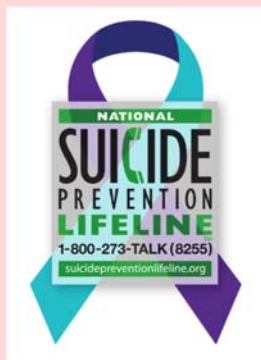


Scott Ridgway (at left) was one of several people who testified. Ridgway testified in favor of the LEA suicide prevention training bill before the House Education Administration and Planning Committee on March 1, alongside state Rep. Mary Littleton (R-Dickson), sponsor of the House version of the bill.

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## WEBINAR EXPLORES STRUCTURE, STRATEGY OF TSPN

A recent webinar sponsored by the Injury Control Research Center for Suicide (ICRC-S) Prevention spotlighted focused on TSPN as an example of a successful statewide suicide prevention program.



Injury Control Research Center  
for Suicide Prevention

“Evaluation of the Tennessee Suicide Prevention Network (TSPN): A Research Collaboration among the TSPN, the Centerstone Research Institute, and the Tennessee Department of Health” took place on March 18, with mental health and suicide prevention professionals from across the United States tuning in. TSPN Executive Director Scott Ridgway and Terry Love, Injury Prevention Manager within the Tennessee Department of Health's Division of Family Health and Wellness (who also chairs TSPN's Intra-State Departmental Group) were among the presenters. Other speakers included Jennifer Lockman, an evaluator for the Centerstone Research Institute, and Susan Gallagher of the Research Training Institute (RTI) out of Rochester, New York.

The presentation summarized a collaborative research project focused on evaluating the Tennessee Suicide Prevention Network facilitated by TSPN and CRI with the guidance of RTI, analyzing its successes in implementing a statewide suicide prevention strategy. It is the culmination of over a year of research that included interviews with key Network volunteers.

After briefly reviewing TSPN's organizational structure and its three-pronged emphasis on prevention, intervention, and postvention, the presentation presents an analysis of the Network according to a community coalition action model. It reviews how TSPN has been able to grow and thrive since its establishment. Specifically, it explored how TSPN has formed effective interagency partnerships via a professionally and demographically diverse membership committed to and connected by a shared purpose, empowered by a clear and active leadership structure capable of plugging qualified members into key assignments and roles while responding to changing community needs, political contexts.

The next step in the research process will involve a quantitative study of TSPN membership, set to be completed this fall. A strategic planning meeting will follow to review the full results and draw conclusions.

The slides from the webinar as well as a full audio recording is available on the ICRC-S website ([bit.ly/1UT9r2g](http://bit.ly/1UT9r2g)).

## COWBOY UP CELEBRATES 10TH ANNIVERSARY

TSPN participated in Cowboy Up's Community Awareness Night on March 15, which marked the tenth anniversary of the latter's establishment.



TSPN Executive Director Scott Ridgway (at far right) was one of the guest speakers at Cowboy Up's 10th anniversary celebration.

Also pictured, from left to right: Catherine Denton, coordinator of the Presidents' Leadership Society; Dr. Christa Martin, Assistant to the President of Columbia State; Regina Peery, Dr. Sandra Perley, Associate Professor of Nursing at Columbia State and a member of TSPN's Advisory Council; Bridget Goodnight, coach of Columbia State's women's basketball team; and Karyl Chastain Beal, TSPN South Central Chair and Advisory Council Co-Chair.

The celebration was held at Cherry Theater at Columbia State Community College and included a guest performance by country rapper Cowboy Troy, who debuted his new song "I Still Feel Hope" during the event. The event also featured a keynote address by longtime Cowboy Up member Tammy McCoy and performances by Columbia-based country/Southern rock group Buck Sixx. Delegates from the Maury County Sheriff's Office were in attendance.

Cowboy Up is a project of the Maury County Junior Auxiliary, devoted to educating local children and youth about suicide awareness and prevention. Since its foundation in 2006, Cowboy Up has been a leading ally within TSPN's South Central Region, partnering with the Network for awareness projects and educational presentations. Cowboy Up's founder, Regina Peery, received TSPN's Madge and Ken Tullis, MD, Suicide Prevention Award in 2013, presented annually to someone who has made unique and profound contributions to Tennessee's suicide prevention awareness movement. Additionally, the Junior Auxiliary of Maury County won TSPN's South Central Regional Suicide Prevention Award in 2008, recognized for its support and sponsorship of Cowboy Up.

Cowboy Troy's second album, "Loco Motive" (released on the Warner Brothers Nashville label) peaked at #2 on the US Country charts in 2005. It included his single "I Play Chicken with the Train", which reached #48 on the US Country singles chart.



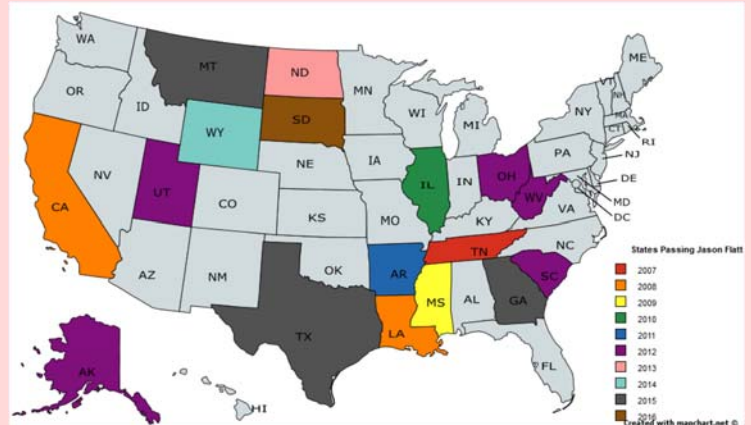
TSPN offers its sincerest thanks to Cowboy Up for all it has done for young people in Maury County over the past ten years and congratulates the agency on reaching this milestone. We look forward to working with them in the future.

## JASON FLATT ACT PASSES IN SOUTH DAKOTA

On March 14, South Dakota became the 17<sup>th</sup> state to adopt the Jason Flatt Act to incorporate youth suicide awareness and prevention legislation into in-service training for teachers.

The state Senate passed Senate Bill 129 unanimously on February 18, and the legislation cleared the House by a vote of 57-11 on March 7.

Like versions of the Flatt Act adopted in other states, it requires all educators in the state to complete two hours of youth suicide awareness and prevention training each year as part of their licensure requirements. It was supported by the state's Department of Education and Teacher's Association, and, as in other states, had no fiscal note attached—in other words, it was determined that it would cost the state nothing to implement.



Tennessee was the first state to pass the Jason Flatt Act. When it was signed into law in 2007, it was the nation's most comprehensive legislation related to youth suicide awareness and prevention education. Other states which have passed versions of the Flatt Act are indicated in the map accompanying this article.

The bill's namesake is the son of Jason Foundation, Inc. (JFI) President/CEO Clark Flatt. After Jason Flatt's death by suicide in 1997 at age 16, his father created the agency which eventually attained national prominence for its work in youth suicide prevention. Headquartered in Hendersonville, JFI routinely partners with TSPN for awareness projects and events.

In a Facebook post announcing passage of the bill in South Dakota, JFI acknowledged the contributions of state Senator Don Haggar (R-Sioux Falls) and state Representative Lynne DiSanto (R-Rapid City) for their sponsorship of the bill, alongside JFI Affiliate office Keystone Treatment Center (a substance abuse treatment center located in Canton), Matt Waltz, the lead JFI rep at Keystone, and Erik Miller.

## REPORT ANALYSES MENTAL HEALTH AT COMMUNITY COLLEGES



The Suicide Prevention Resource Center (SPRC), in collaboration with the Wisconsin HOPE Lab, has released a new report on community college student mental health.

“Too Distressed to Learn? Mental Health Among Community College Students” summarizes findings from a survey of over 4,000 students at 10 community colleges from across the United States. The report found mental health problems are more prevalent within community colleges than at four-year schools, and use of mental health services are lower as well. (These findings support independent research on community college suicide prevention resources as conducted by Dr. Sandra Perley of Columbia State Community College, which she presented during last month's Advisory Council meeting. See the March edition of the *TSPN Call to Action* for a summary.)

The report offers recommendations for community college administrators, as well as federal and state policymakers, for addressing this issue. It also reviews programs that address community college student mental health, such as Active Minds, the Jed Foundation's Campus Program, and Single Stop.

The Wisconsin HOPE Lab is the nation's first laboratory for translational research aimed at improving equitable outcomes in postsecondary education, working to help policymakers, practitioners, students, and families understand the costs of attending college and find effective ways to cover these costs that improve degree completion rates as well as the personal and societal benefits of postsecondary education.

“Too Distressed to Learn?” is available for free download on the Wisconsin HOPE Lab's website ([bit.ly/1QMObAS](http://bit.ly/1QMObAS)).



## REFLECTIONS FROM A QPR TRAINER



*This past October, TSPN hosted a series of “Question, Persuade, and Refer” (QPR) instructor training sessions, held at various locations in Jackson, Louisville, and Nashville. About 50 people took part in They are now active across the state, providing the general public with the skills and information they need to intervene in a suicide crisis and save a life.*

*Rev. Jill Zimmer, a chaplain at St. Thomas Hickman Hospital, was one of the participants in this round of QPR instructor trainings offered by TSPN in October. On February 29, she circulated this essay to members of Behavioral Health and Suicide Prevention for Hickman-Perry Counties (formerly known as the Hickman-Perry Counties Suicide Prevention Task Force), discussing her experiences as a QPR trainer. Zimmer has graciously permitted us to share this essay with TSPN members across the state.*

Imperfections are not inadequacies: they are reminders that we are all in this together.  
– Brene Brown

Last week, I had the privilege of leading a training on suicide prevention. Boiled down, the training included information about suicide, how to prevent it, and how to talk about it openly and honestly if you think someone you know is considering it. In order to prepare for this, I did a lot of reading and studying. I also attended trainings and meetings of the Tennessee Suicide Prevention Network. And the training went well. A group gathered and we shared our ideas and feelings and all learned together.

Over the weekend, I got a haircut and the woman who cuts my hair really loves to talk. As usual, she asked how I have been and what has been happening in my life. I told her that I was excited about this training and she immediately fell silent. Her entire posture changed. She went from bubbly and extroverted to withdrawn and avoidant. This moment reminded me how far we really have to go in order to scrape away the stigma about suicide and mental health. I went on to tell her a little about the training and to share that I believe open communication about such difficult topics is the most loving and compassionate solution. She slowly asked a few questions and by the time I left she had warmed back up; but for me this was an important moment. I realized that I have spent years becoming comfortable talking about uncomfortable topics and sometimes I can forget what a struggle it is for some of us who have had less practice.



What keeps us from open communication? I truly believe it is not because in general we don't care about one another. I think the main thing that keeps us from such open communication is shame. Shame is the feeling that creeps us and says “who are you to say something?” Shame tells us that we are not good enough or we don't know enough. Shame is very different than guilt. Guilt focuses on a behavior—feeling regret for an action. Shame focuses on self—feeling that you are bad or unworthy. If you think about it, guilt can be a positive feeling. It reminds you that you want to be better than the way you acted—and it believes you can improve. Guilt allows actions to teach us and then lets them become a part of our past and no longer live in our present. Shame focuses on the present and can keep us in a perpetual state of fear: fear of seeming weak, fear of appearing imperfect, fear of being vulnerable. And the bottom line is that shame is isolating and can even be deadly. It can keep us from reaching out to one another for help when we need it most.

Yet, there is good news: shame cannot live in the light. Shame thrives in the dark—in secrecy and silence. When we feel shame and we keep our struggles to ourselves, the feeling can snowball and overwhelm us. But sharing our struggles with one another and sharing our pain opens us up to both giving and receiving hope and to realizing that we are not alone—we are in this together. My hope for us as a community is more open communication—more more sharing of stories and struggles with each other. And my prayer is for each of us to let go of shame and embrace our imperfections as small steps on a much longer journey toward wholeness.

*TSPN expresses its thanks to St. Thomas Hickman Hospital for its support of QPR training within its facility as well as its ongoing partnership with us to prevent suicide.*

*If you are interested in becoming a QPR instructor, leading sessions for other people in your workplace or community, contact the TSPN central office at [tspn@tspn.org](mailto:tspn@tspn.org). If you are interested in having a QPR training session for your agency, refer to the online training form on the TSPN homepage (the “Request Training Now” button on the right).*

# TSPN REGIONAL CALENDAR

No December meetings are scheduled unless otherwise marked. Dates marked in **bold and in Pakistan green** indicate alternate meeting dates intended to accommodate state holidays or other previously scheduled events.

## East Tennessee Region

monthly, 3rd Thursday, 12:15 PM  
Third Floor Conference Room, Cherokee Health Systems, 2018 Western Avenue, Knoxville, 37921  
April 21, May 19, June 16, July 21, August 18, no meeting in September, October 20, November 17, no meeting in December

## Memphis/Shelby County Region

monthly, 3rd Tuesday, 11:30 AM  
Memphis Crisis Centers Training Facility, 70 North Pauline, Memphis, 38105  
April 19, May 17, June 21, July 19, August 16, no meeting in September, October 18, November 15, no meeting in December

## Mid-Cumberland Region

monthly, 2nd Thursday, 9:30 AM  
TSPN central office, 446 Metroplex Drive, Suite A-224, Nashville, 37211  
April 14, May 12 (held at Your Heart on Art), June 9, July 14, August 11 (location TBD), no meeting in September, October 13, November 10 (location TBD), December 8

## Northeast Region

monthly, 4th Tuesday, 10:30 AM  
Room 10, Boone's Creek Christian Church, 305 Christian Church Road, Gray, 37615  
(Entrance B recommended)  
April 26, May 24, June 28, July 26, August 23, September 27, October 25, and **November 15**

## Rural West

monthly, 3rd Wednesday, 10:30 AM  
Fourth Floor, West Tennessee Healthcare Building, 1804 Highway 45 Bypass, Jackson, 38305  
April 20, May 18, June 15, July 20, August 17, no meeting in September, October 19, and November 16

## South Central

monthly, 1st Wednesday, 11:00 AM  
Conference Room A, South Central Regional Health Office, 1216 Trotwood Avenue, Columbia, 38401  
April 6, May 4, June 1, July 6, August 3, no meeting in September, October 5, November 2, and December 7

## Southeast Region

monthly, first Thursday, 11:30 AM  
Mental Health Cooperative of Chattanooga, 801 North Holtzclaw Avenue, Suite 101, Chattanooga, 37404  
April 7, May 5, June 2, July 7, August 4, September 1, October 6, November 3, and December 1

## Upper Cumberland Region

monthly, 4th Thursday, 9:00 AM  
Volunteer Behavioral Health, 1200 Willow Avenue, Cookeville, 38502  
April 28, May 26, June 23, July 28, August 25, no meeting in September, October 27, **November 17**, and December 22

## Intra-State Department Meetings

2 PM–4 PM  
TSPN central office, 446 Metroplex Drive, Suite A-224, Nashville, TN 37211  
May 11, August 10, and November 9

## Advisory Council

June 29-30 (Montgomery Bell State Park Inn, 1000 Hotel Avenue, Burns, 37029)  
September 14 (Trevecca Community Church, 335 Murfreesboro Road, Nashville, 37210)

## Blount County Mental Health Awareness and Suicide Prevention Alliance

monthly, 1st Friday, 12:00 PM  
Boys and Girls Club Meeting Room, Fort Craig Elementary School, 520 South Washington Street, Maryville, 37804  
April 1, May 6, June 3, Executive Committee meeting in July, August 5, September 2, October 7, November 4, and December 2

## Davidson County Suicide Prevention Task Force

monthly, 4th Tuesday, 3:00 PM  
Large Conference Room at Mental Health Cooperative, 275 Cumberland Bend Drive, Nashville 37228  
April 26, May 24, June 28, July 26, August 23, no meeting in September, October 25, **November 15**, no meeting in December

## Giles County Suicide Prevention Task Force

quarterly, 3rd Monday, 10:30 AM  
Giles County Career Center, 125 South Cedar Lane, Pulaski, 38478  
June 20, September 19, and December 19

## Behavioral Health and Suicide Prevention for Hickman-Perry Counties

monthly, 4th Friday, 12:00 PM (lunch served at 11:30 AM)  
Conference Room, St. Thomas Hickman Hospital, 135 East Swan Street, Centerville, 37033  
April 22, May 27, June 24, July 22, August 26, no meeting in September, October 28, **November 18**, no meeting in December

## Montgomery-Houston-Humphreys-Stewart Suicide Prevention Task Force

monthly, 3rd Friday, 9 AM  
Youth Villages, 651 Stowe Court, Clarksville, 37040  
April 15, May 20, June 17, July 15, August 19, September 16, October 21, November 18, December 16

## Rutherford County Suicide Prevention Coalition

monthly, 1st Tuesday, 5:15 PM  
TrustPoint Hospital, 1009 North Thompson Lane, Murfreesboro, 37129  
April 5, May 3, June 7, July 5, August 2, September 6, October 4, November 1, and December 6



TSPN East Tennessee Regional Coordinator facilitated "Suicide Awareness/Prevention in the LGBTQ Community" on March 6 at Open Chord/All Things Music, a cafe/music school/retail store in Knoxville. Unity Transformation, a church which meets at Open Chord, co-sponsored this workshop.

# ADVISORY COUNCIL CONTACT INFORMATION

If you are interested in getting involved with TSPN on a local level or have other questions, contact the chairperson of your region as indicated by the map provided below:

## East Tennessee region

Anne Young, MS, CAS  
(865) 216-9884

[anneyoung@cornerstoneofrecovery.com](mailto:anneyoung@cornerstoneofrecovery.com)

## Memphis and Shelby County

Pastor Waring Porter  
(901) 233-2175

[wporter@allsaintspres.com](mailto:wporter@allsaintspres.com)

## Mid-Cumberland region

Eileen Wallach  
(615) 456-3777

[eileen@yourheartonart.org](mailto:eileen@yourheartonart.org)

## Northeast region

Jack Stewart, MA  
(423) 787-1663

[bluespringsdc@yahoo.com](mailto:bluespringsdc@yahoo.com)

## Rural West region

Sabrina Anderson  
(731) 422-2008

[sanderson@bgcjmc.org](mailto:sanderson@bgcjmc.org)

## South Central region

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## Southeast region

Eve Nite

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## Upper Cumberland region

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## Advisory Council Chair

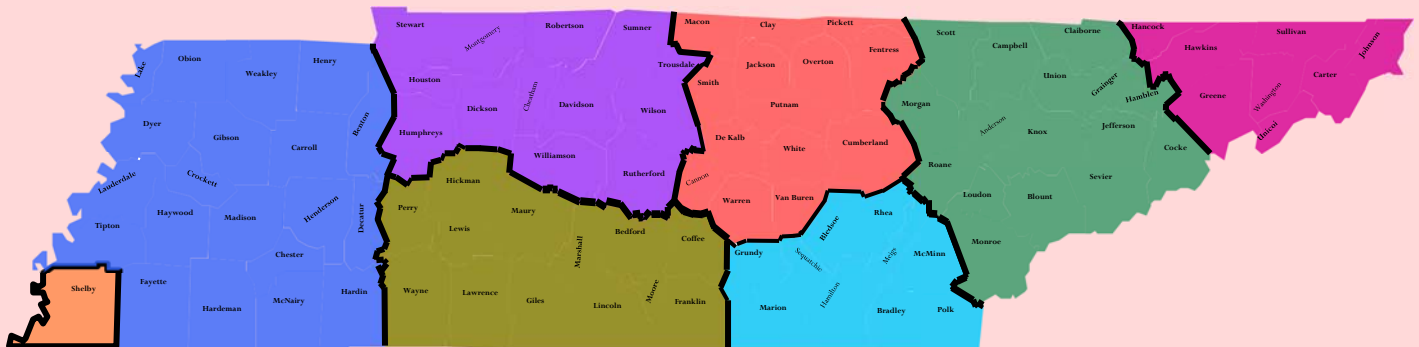
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Vladimir Enlow, MTS, Executive Assistant: (615) 297-1077 or [vladimire@tspn.org](mailto:vladimire@tspn.org)