

Youth Suicide in Manitoba 2009-2012

Office of the Children's Advocate, Winnipeg, Manitoba

Introduction

The Office of the Children's Advocate

The Office of the Children's Advocate is charged with conducting reviews of services following the death of children who had involvement with the child welfare system. In fulfilling this role, basic information is received from the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner on all child deaths occurring in the Province of Manitoba. Through the course of the investigation, further information is gathered regarding children involved with the child welfare system.

Overview of Youth Suicides

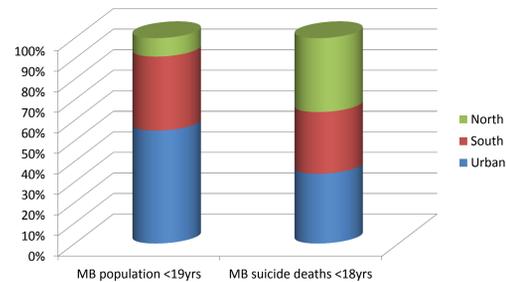
Demographics

61 Manitoba youth under 18 years of age died by suicide:

- 38 were female (62%)
- 59 were due to strangulation (97%)
 - 2 non-strangulation were male

Geography

In looking at the geographic location of youth suicide deaths, at the time of fatal injury, the North is overrepresented when compared to other regions.



Manitoba First Nations

First Nations are also overrepresented when looking at geography, with 49% of youth suicide deaths, or the associated fatal injury, occurring on a Manitoba First Nation.

Geographic regions categorized by Regional Health Authorities as follows: Urban – Winnipeg RHA and Brandon RHA; North – Burntwood RHA, Nor-Man RHA, and Churchill RHA; South – all other RHAs. Information on population obtained from *How are Manitoba's Children Doing?*

Age

2009-2012 saw a significant number of younger youth dying by suicide, with 23% of the suicides being children 14 years of age or younger.

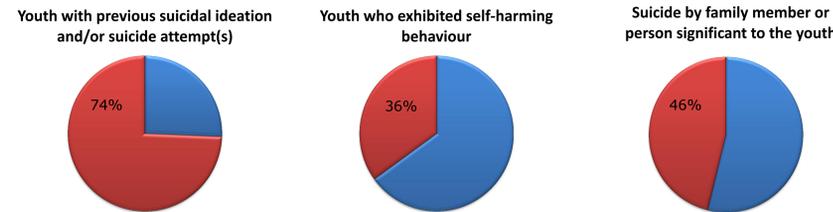
When looking specifically at deaths in the 13-17 year old age group, suicide accounted for the largest proportion of deaths at 38%. When looking at child deaths for all ages, suicide accounted for 10%.

Reviewable Suicides

Reviewable suicides are those where the youth, or their family, had involvement with the Manitoba child welfare system within the year prior to death. In these circumstances, the Office of the Children's Advocate reviews the child welfare and publically funded social services that were provided. From 2009-2012, 39 of the 61 suicides were reviewable. Available histories for these 39 youth were reviewed and commonalities were noted.

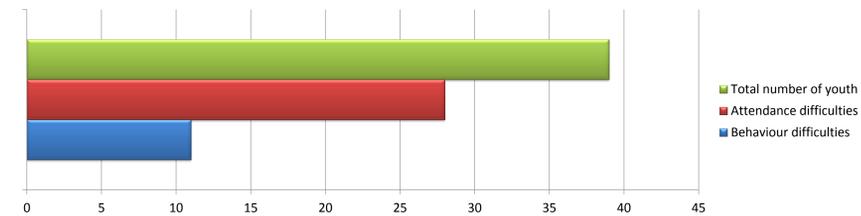
Suicide Experience, Behaviour, and Exposure

Percentage of youth whose histories indicated they had the following experiences:



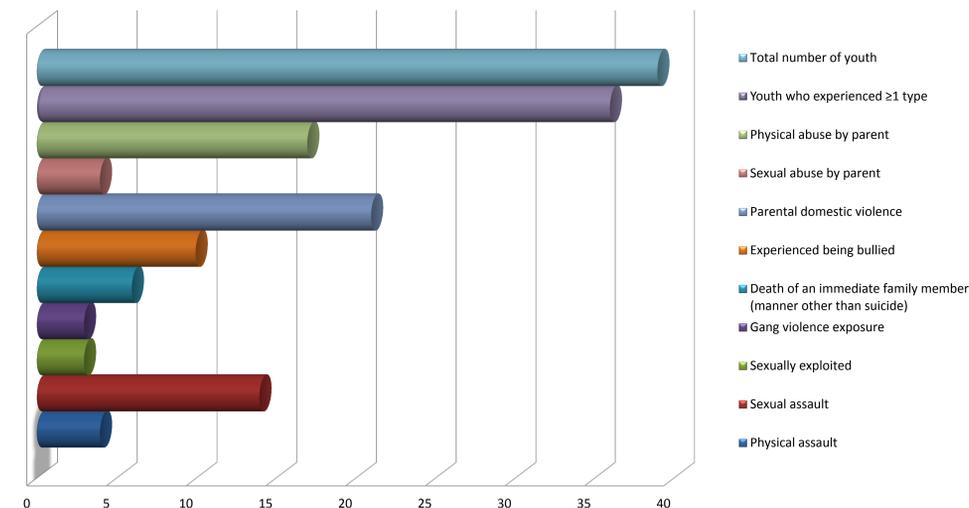
School

Overall, 77% of the youth had histories that identified them as having experienced attendance or behaviour difficulties at school:



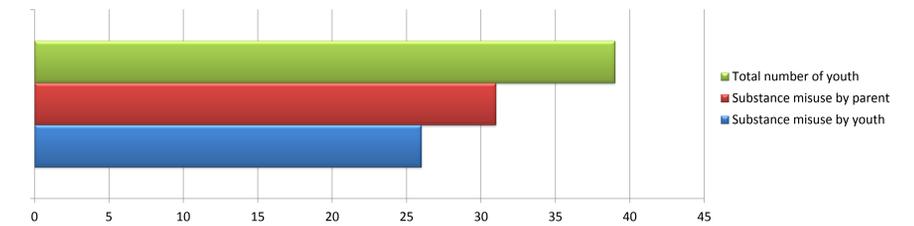
Adverse Experiences

Frequency of alleged adverse experience by type:



Substance Use

Number of youth whose histories indicated the following experiences:



Implications

Youth suicide prevention strategies in Manitoba need to consider the following:

- Suicide risk to younger youth
- Females are at higher risk than males
- Youth in the North are at a substantially increased risk
- First Nations communities experience an increased rate of youth suicides

Many Manitoba youth who die by suicide may not regularly attend school. Prevention, support, and intervention services need to target children beyond the school system.

A concentrated suicide prevention and intervention strategy may be helpful for children and youth who have been exposed to, or have engaged in, suicide ideation, behaviour, or attempts.

Interventions which reduce or eliminate adverse childhood experiences may assist in reducing suicide rates for youth. Where adverse childhood experiences do occur, effectively supporting these children and families may also assist.

References

Brownell, M., Chartier, M., Santos, R., Okechukwa, E., Au, W., et al. (2012). *How are Manitoba's children doing?* Winnipeg, MB: Manitoba Centre for Health Policy.

Vision: A safe and healthy society that hears, includes, values, and protects all children and youth.



Mission: To ensure the voices of the children and youth involved with the child welfare system are heard. As an independent office, we advocate for systemic change for the benefit of children and youth under *The Child and Family Services Act* and *The Adoption Act*.