

REPORT HIGHLIGHTS



SUICIDE PREVENTION
PERFORMANCE AUDIT, NOVEMBER 2020

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENT
OFFICE OF SUICIDE PREVENTION
SUICIDE PREVENTION COMMISSION

CONCLUSION

The Office of Suicide Prevention (Office) and the Suicide Prevention Commission have sound processes for identifying priority areas for targeting the State's suicide prevention efforts. However, there are opportunities for the Office to ensure that it receives full value and benefit from its investment of limited resources for those efforts.

KEY RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS

- One primary activity of the Office is to fund suicide prevention activities across the state through contracts and grants. The Office executed 80 agreements between July 2016 and June 2019 and had paid \$3.7 million to contractors and grantees for these agreements as of March 2020.
- Agreements ranged from small-dollar grants of \$1,500 to \$20,000 awarded to local entities to implement community-specific prevention strategies, to a large-dollar contract of \$652,000, to fund a multi-year effort to provide telephonic follow-up care to individuals discharged from hospitals and at risk for suicide.
- The Office executes agreements that reasonably establish performance expectations to further the State's suicide prevention priorities and collects deliverables from its contractors and grantees to demonstrate the work that has been completed.
- However, we found that for seven of the 30 sampled agreements (23 percent), the Office reimbursed grantee costs even though the grantees did not meet some performance expectations outlined in the agreements as essential activities or standards necessary for the success of the project.
- We estimate that about \$301,000 of the \$3.7 million spent on agreements through March 2020, was spent on agreements in which the grantees did not meet all of the performance expectations in the written agreements.

BACKGROUND

- Colorado's suicide rate is the 10th highest in the nation. Between 2015 and 2019, Colorado's suicide rate increased from 19.5 to 21.6 per 100,000 people.
- The Office, located in the Department of Public Health and Environment, is tasked with coordinating suicide prevention strategies for the State.
- In 2014, the General Assembly established the Suicide Prevention Commission to advise the Office and provide recommendations to improve the State's suicide prevention strategy.
- Office spending has increased from about \$600,000 in Fiscal Year 2017, to \$2.9 million in Fiscal Year 2020, due, in part, to awards from the federal government and new funding from the General Assembly.

AUDIT APPROACH

Our audit provides detailed information about the 11 key suicide prevention activities funded by the Office in Fiscal Years 2017 through 2019, including funding sources and spending; key accomplishments, such as the number of people trained or organizations contacted for outreach; what is known about the activity's outcomes, including whether outcomes are difficult to measure; and which counties were served by the activity.

The report makes one recommendation for the Department of Public Health and Environment to improve its contract and grant agreements to ensure the State receives the expected value from those agreements. The Department agreed with our recommendation.