

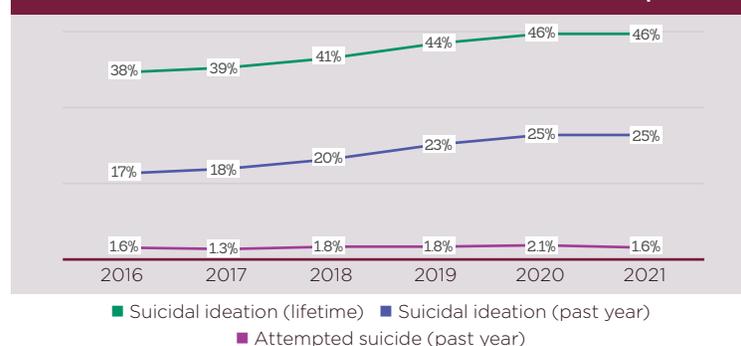
# Ask. Listen. Refer. and Suicidal Ideation Among Missouri College Students

Partners in Prevention (PIP) is Missouri's higher education substance misuse consortium dedicated to creating healthy and safe college campuses. The coalition is comprised of 24 public and private colleges and universities in the state working to address the critical health behaviors of college students using evidence-informed interventions. To measure progress and obtain data needed for the implementation of programs, PIP created the Missouri Assessment of College Health Behaviors (MACHB) Survey. The MACHB is an annual, online survey that has been implemented each spring since 2007. The survey assesses the roles that alcohol, drugs (illicit and prescription), tobacco/nicotine, interpersonal violence, and mental health have on student health and wellness. This brief will focus on data on suicidal ideation from the MACHB and outcomes of the Ask. Listen. Refer online suicide prevention training.

## Prevalence

According to the 2021 MACHB, almost half (46%) of Missouri college students reported having suicidal thoughts in their lifetime, and 1 in 4 (25%) reported suicidal thoughts in the past year. Approximately 1.6% of Missouri college students reported that they had attempted suicide in the past year. Trend data for lifetime suicidal ideation, past year suicidal ideation, and past year suicide attempt are shown in chart 1.

**Chart 1 - Trends in Suicidal Ideation and Attempts**



Of students who had suicidal thoughts or attempted suicide in the past year, 38% sought assistance for their suicidal attempt/thoughts. The highest percentages of students endorsed that they sought assistance from an off-campus mental health provider (35%) or the college/university counseling center (22%). Students who did not seek assistance reported

common barriers such as feeling shame (42%), being afraid of judgment (34%), high cost/no insurance (30%), and fear of hospitalization (26%)\*. Though 40% of students who did not seek assistance also reported that they did not seek assistance because they did not think they needed it.

Related to suicidality of others, 44% of students say that they have been concerned about a friend exhibiting suicidal thoughts/behaviors in the past year. Most students also say they would be likely or very likely to bring up the topic of suicide with someone they think is at risk (63%) and refer someone who tells them they are thinking about suicide to a local resource (83%) as shown in chart 2.

**Chart 2 - Willingness to Discuss and Refer Someone at Risk**



Over half (52%) of Missouri college students say they would be willing to complete an online suicide prevention training. However, only 26% of students say that they have heard of the Ask. Listen. Refer. online suicide prevention training, discussed in the next section (though the range among campuses is 6.8% to 60%).

## Ask. Listen. Refer.

Ask. Listen. Refer. (ALR) is a free online suicide prevention training program for colleges and universities. During the 20-minute ALR training program, participants learn about signs and symptoms of suicidal behavior, common myths about suicide, how to ask if someone is considering suicide, and how to make trauma-informed resource referrals. Participants are given a pre and post-test to evaluate knowledge, attitudes, and willingness to intervene. Averaged pre-test scores among all participants over the past 12 months indicate that out of 31 points, the average pre-test score is 22 points, and the average post-test score is 26 points.

Chart 3 - ALR Pre and Post-Test Results				
	Pre-test Score	Post-test Score	% Change	N
Students	22	25	+13.6%	11,741
Faculty	23	27	+17.4%	199
Staff	23	27	+17.4%	624
Other	23	26	+13.0%	65
Parents/Family	21	26	+23.8%	14

Participants are also asked in the ALR training pre and post-test to indicate likelihood of bringing up the topic of suicide with someone they think is at risk and

referring someone who tells them they are thinking about suicide to a local resource. The pre and post-test results for all users are shown in chart 3, showing an increase in likely and very likely asking someone if they are thinking of suicide and referring someone with suicidal thoughts to a resource.

## Summary

As suicide is currently the second leading cause of death among college-aged individuals (18-24)<sup>1</sup> it is vital to address the mental health needs and suicidality of Missouri college students. It is also important to promote help-seeking behaviors and work to eliminate barriers that may prevent students from seeking assistance.

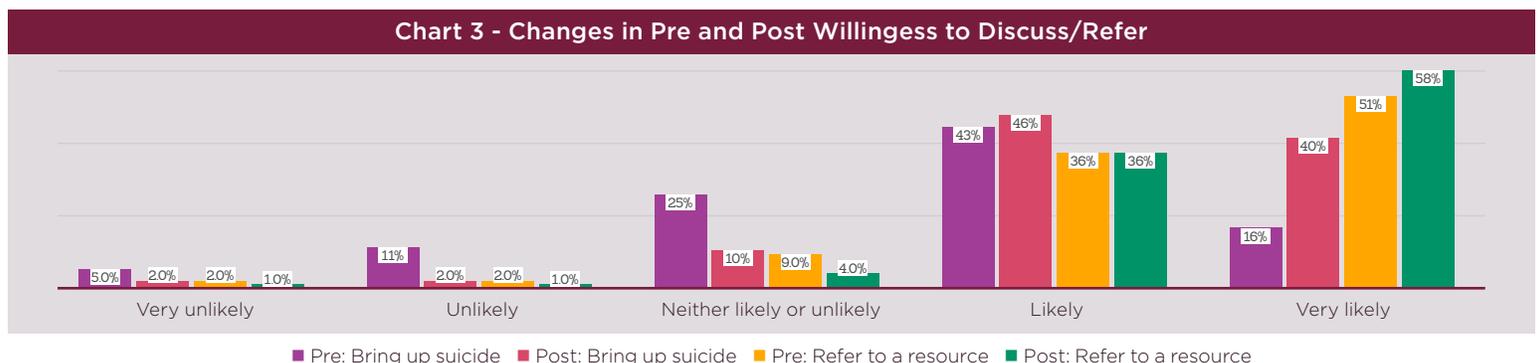
MACHB and ALR data indicate that students are interested in learning about how they can help prevent suicide, and that they are willing to engage in training around this topic. The pre and post-test results of ALR continue to support its efficacy in educating individuals about suicide and increasing their willingness to engage in conversations about suicide and encourage others to seek help. Resources related to promoting the ALR program can be found online at the [Ask. Listen. Refer Toolkit page](#) and the training itself can be found at [asklistenrefer.org](http://asklistenrefer.org)

Contact Partners in Prevention at (573) 884-7551.

Report prepared by Margo Leitschuh, Communications Coordinator. Data prepared by Dong Ding and Kayleigh Greenwood, Research Coordinators. Published May 2022.

1. Heron M. Deaths: Leading causes for 2017. National Vital Statistics Reports; vol 68 no 6. Hyattsville, MD: National Center for Health Statistics. 2019.

\*question is select all that apply



For more information, visit [mopip.org](http://mopip.org)

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