



Roughly one Nova Scotian dies every 72 hours from suicide

By [Amber Fryday](#) Global News September 10, 2021

Friday, Sept. 10 marks World Suicide Prevention Day, a day to raise awareness about mental health and [suicide](#) prevention.

Fourteen years ago, Carol Rolfe-Higney lost her 19-year-old son, Adam Cashen to suicide. His friends and family were left devastated and shocked by his death.

“Adam was a very sweet, kind, intelligent, athletic, extremely popular, handsome young man. Somebody that was so active. So ‘life of the party.’ How would anybody tell me, ‘Hey, your son is suffering,’ because he was the one who helped everyone else,” she told Global News.

According to Halifax-based psychologist, Simon Sherry, roughly one Nova Scotian dies by suicide every 72 hours and around 4,000 Canadians are lost each year.

“Suicide Awareness Day is enormously important. Suicide is one of the top ten killers in people around the world and it’s a particularly large problem for Canadians and Nova Scotians. We lose some of our most vulnerable citizens to suicide every year,” Sherry said.

Rolfe-Higney says leading up to her son’s death, she didn’t notice anything that would have indicated that her son may have been struggling with his mental health. In hindsight though, she says it now seems more apparent.

“He would be quiet at times, overly sensitive –but not anything that really stood out at the time.”

In the months before his death, Adam had lost three friends in a tragic car accident, as well as his grandfather. He began to drink alcohol excessively, as a coping mechanism. His mother said he did mention suicide the night before he died, but she didn’t think anything of it.

Rolfe-Higney has been very transparent about her son's death, wanting to destigmatize suicide and says she became an advocate for mental health the day he died. She is now a co-coordinator of the Halifax Walk for World Suicide Prevention Day.

"I've done a lot of work with families one-on-one after they've lost someone they love to suicide, especially youth. I did a pamphlet with Dr. Stan Kutcher which is still used today," she said.

Dr. Sherry says suicide is preventable. He says access to the means by which people die by suicide should be restricted, and more effective care needs to be provided to people having suicidal thoughts.

"We need to be active in our care with people in sealing the cracks in our health-care system that Nova Scotians too often fall through."

Sherry says Nova Scotia lacks a funded and energized suicide prevention strategy. There is no funding, no timelines or urgency. It's a potential way to prevent suicide but you need a "real budget with a real timeline in order to prevent suicide in our province," he said.

He says that if Nova Scotia chooses to dedicate necessary funds toward suicide prevention, within the first year, there would likely be a 25 per cent reduction in suicide rates.

"We are losing more people to suicide than we are to the pandemic," he said.