



THE Carson J Spencer
FOUNDATION

Contact:

Dr. Sally Spencer-Thomas

CEO & Co-Founder

Carson J Spencer Foundation

720-244-6535

Sally@CarsonJSpencer.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CDC Report on Occupation and Suicide: Carson J Spencer Foundation's Response

Making Suicide Prevention a Health and Safety Priority at Work

Denver, Colorado. July 6, 2016. When the CDC released its report on occupation and suicide last week, many employers took notice. For the first time, researchers were able to rank industries by highest rank and largest numbers of deaths by suicide across 17 states. This milestone report immediately got the attention of industry leaders concerned about the health and safety of their employees. The Carson J Spencer Foundation, the nation's leader in suicide prevention in the workplace, fielded scores of inquiries over the holiday weekend as companies requested information on how to build a zero suicide safety culture in their workplaces and associations. For more information, visit www.WorkingMinds.org.

Two issues tend to make industries more at risk – the demographics of the workforce and the nature of the work itself. Workforces that are male dominated tend to have higher rates for suicide because men die by suicide at nearly four times the rate of women and represent 77.9% of all suicides ([CDC, 2015](#)). Additionally industries that have the following qualities also tend to have higher risk for suicide:

- Access to lethal means (e.g., firearms, pills, high places)
- Ethos of fearlessness, recklessness and/or stoicism
- Exposed to trauma
- Culture of substance abuse
- Fragmented community or isolation
- Humiliation or shame
- Sense purposelessness
- Entrapment (feeling trapped in a distressing work situation)

“This report is a game changer,” said Dr. Sally Spencer-Thomas, CEO of the Carson J Spencer Foundation, a Denver-based organization known for leading innovation in suicide prevention and the umbrella program for the nation's leading workplace suicide prevention program called Working Minds™. “For a decade, we've been helping workplaces build comprehensive and sustained suicide prevention strategies. This report now gives employers the data to help justify these efforts.”

The timing of the report release coincided with the conclusion of the Construction Financial Management Association annual conference in San Antonio where suicide prevention was a central focal point. Over the past nine months many new construction industry suicide prevention resources and publications emerged as the construction leaders started to acknowledge a growing concern. More information here: www.ConstructionWorkingMinds.org.

“Increasingly, we are hearing employers say, ‘Not another life to lose. What can I do to prevent this from happening with my employees?’” said Spencer-Thomas. “They want a road map to integrate psychological safety into their existing safety culture.”

Because most adults spend more waking hours at work than they do at home, workplaces are critical partners in a community approach to suicide prevention. Employers who value the well-being of their staff realize that it is not good enough to get people home safely from work, they also need to provide support in making sure employees get back to work safely from home. Like most cultural change, a multi-dimensional, long-term strategy is warranted integrating mental health services, training, communication strategies, leadership, and crisis response.

- Full CDC report here <http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/65/wr/mm6525a1.htm>.
- The National Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention response here: <http://actionallianceforsuicideprevention.org/sites/actionallianceforsuicideprevention.org/files/CDCResponse.pdf>

Occupational Rank for Highest Rates of Suicide Deaths ⁱ		
RANK	Occupation	Rate per 100,000
1	Farming, fishing, and forestry	84.5
2	Construction and extraction	53.3
3	Installation, maintenance, and repair	47.9
4	Production	34.5
5	Architecture and engineering	32.2
6	Protective service	30.5
7	Arts, design, entertainment, sports, and media	24.3
8	Computer and mathematical	23.3
9	Transportation and material moving	22.3

10	Management	20.3
Occupational Rank for Highest Numbers of Suicide Deaths ⁱⁱ		
RANK	Occupational Group	Numbers (%)
1	Construction and extraction	1,324 (10.8)
2	Management	1,049 (8.5)
3	Production	953 (7.7)
4	Installation, maintenance, and repair	780 (6.3)
5	Unknown	729 (5.9)
6	Student	665 (5.4)
7	Sales and related	651 (5.3)
8	Transportation and material moving	644 (5.2)
9	Homemaker, Housewife	534 (4.3)
10	Office and administrative support	481 (3.9)

###

About the Carson J Spencer Foundation - Sustaining a Passion for Living

The Carson J Spencer Foundation (www.CarsonJSpencer.org) is a Colorado nonprofit, established in 2005. We envision a world where leaders and communities are committed to sustaining a passion for living. As leaders in innovation in suicide prevention, our mission is to elevate the conversation to make suicide prevention a health and safety priority. We do this by:

- Delivering innovative and effective suicide prevention programs for working-aged people
- Coaching young leaders to develop social enterprises for mental health promotion and suicide prevention
- Supporting people bereaved by suicide

About the Working Minds™ Program

Working Minds™ (www.WorkingMinds.org) is the nation's first suicide prevention program exclusively dedicated to the workplace. Our purpose is to give employers the confidence and competence to integrate suicide prevention into their overall health and safety culture. Since 2007, Working Minds™ has offered training and resources to industry leaders to help them build cost-efficient, effective, and culturally relevant suicide prevention strategies.

ⁱ Source: McIntosh WL, Spies E, Stone DM, Lokey CN, Trudeau AT, Bartholow B. Suicide Rates by Occupational Group — 17 States, 2012. MMWR Morb Mortal Wkly Rep 2016;65:641–645. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.15585/mmwr.mm6525a1>.

ⁱⁱ Ibid