



## The role of the family therapist and health professional in mental health promotion and youth suicide prevention

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### Abstract

Youth suicide is complex and remains an issue of concern to all of us who work with families, including family therapists and health professionals. Having worked within a child, adolescent and family mental health service as a family therapist, psychiatric nurse and Mental Health Promotion Officer in Gippsland, Victoria, the author is in an interesting position to reflect upon and integrate each of these approaches into a whole population health approach to youth suicide prevention. These views are presented in three parts, beginning with an overview of youth suicide, depression and the current suicide prevention strategy. Then, the role and effectiveness of family therapy in working with these issues is presented. Finally, integration of mental health promotion with family therapy is reviewed. The challenges and opportunities for family therapists and other health professionals in striving to achieve integration in mental health promotion and youth suicide prevention are discussed. Practice examples from the author's rural region are included to demonstrate the fit of this approach with current youth suicide prevention strategies and research.

### Keywords

*youth suicide, suicide prevention, adolescents, depression, family therapy, mental health promotion, health professionals*

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