



NEWS RELEASE

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Media Contact:

Katie Bronk
Corporate Communications
(630) 792-5175
kbronk@jointcommission.org

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Implementing Universal Screening to Identify Suicide Risk in Pediatric Patients

Study in August 2021 issue of The Joint Commission Journal on Quality and Patient Safety

(OAKBROOK TERRACE, Illinois, July 27, 2021) – The 2019 Youth Risk Behavior Survey revealed that 17.2% of high school students in the United States had seriously considered suicide in the past year, and nearly half of those students (7.4%) reported making a suicidal attempt.¹

Health care providers are in a prime position to identify teens at risk for suicide, yet many do not. A new study in the August 2021 issue of *The Joint Commission Journal on Quality and Patient Safety* (JQPS), "[Implementing Universal Suicide Risk Screening in a Pediatric Hospital](#)," details the development and implementation of a hospital-wide program to identify teens at elevated risk for suicide and to connect them with services.

Patients 12 years and older were screened for suicide risk using the Ask Suicide-Screening Questions (ASQ) at Children's Mercy Kansas City, which includes two emergency departments, three urgent care clinics, and a number of ambulatory clinics. The Columbia-Suicide Severity Rating Scale (C-SSRS) was used in mental health areas.

During the first year of screening, 138,598 screens were completed, and 6.8% of screens were positive for elevated suicide risk. Any positive screens prompted a social worker to complete a more thorough assessment and determine next steps for those patients not being evaluated by a mental health care provider. Social workers also completed outreach to patients in the weeks following a positive screen.

¹Ivey-Stephenson AZ, et al. Suicidal ideation and behaviors among high school students—Youth Risk Behavior Survey, United States, 2019. *MMWR Suppl.* 2020 Aug 21;69:47–55. <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/69/su/pdfs/su6901a6-H.pdf>.

The study authors concluded that “early involvement of stakeholders and hospital leaders and a robust response plan were essential to successful implementation of the suicide-screening program.”

Also featured in the August issue:

- [Root Cause Analysis of Adverse Events Involving Opioid Overdoses in the Veterans Health Administration](#) (White River Junction VA Medical Center, White River Junction, Vermont)
- [A Comprehensive Departmental Care Review Model: Requirements, Structure, and Flow](#) (Mayo Clinic, Rochester, Minnesota)
- [A Clinic-Based Quality Improvement Initiative to Increase Screening for Gonorrhea and Chlamydia in Adolescents](#) (University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, North Carolina)
- [A Quality Improvement Initiative to Reduce Rejected Laboratory Samples and Enhance Specimen Acceptability](#) (Hamad Medical Corporation, Doha, Qatar)
- [Developing Tools to Enhance the Adaptive Capacity \(Safety II\) of Health Care Providers at a Children’s Hospital](#) (Nationwide Children’s Hospital, Columbus, Ohio)
- [Comparison of Patient Experience with Telehealth vs. In-Person Visits Before and During the COVID-19 Pandemic](#) (Northwestern Medicine, Chicago)
- [Addressing Referrals to Dental Specialists](#) (Mayo Clinic, Rochester, Minnesota)
- 2020 John M. Eisenberg Patient Safety and Quality Award recipients
 - [An Interview with David M. Gaba](#) (individual achievement)
 - [Saving Lives: The Veterans Health Administration \(VHA\) Rapid Naloxone Initiative](#) (national level)
 - [Implementation and Effects of a Team-Based Quality Improvement Training Program Across a Health System: The Northwestern Medicine Academy for Quality and Safety Improvement](#) (local level)

For more information, visit [The Joint Commission Journal on Quality and Patient Safety website](#).

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Note for editors

The article is “[Implementing Universal Suicide Risk Screening in a Pediatric Hospital](#)” by Shayla A. Sullivant, MD; Debby Brookstein, MSW, LCSW, LSCSW; Michelle Camerer, LCSW, LMSW, LSCSW; Joan Benson, MSN, RN-BC, CPN; Mark Connelly, PhD; John Lantos, MD; Karen Cox, PhD, RN, FAAN; and Kathy Goggin, PhD. The article appears in *The Joint Commission Journal on Quality and Patient Safety*, volume 47, number 8 (August 2021), published by Elsevier.

The Joint Commission Journal on Quality and Patient Safety

[The Joint Commission Journal on Quality and Patient Safety](#) (JQPS) is a peer-reviewed journal providing health care professionals with innovative thinking, strategies and practices in improving quality and safety in health care. JQPS is the official journal of [The Joint Commission](#) and [Joint Commission Resources, Inc.](#) Original case studies, program or project reports, reports of new methodologies or the new application of methodologies, research studies, and commentaries on issues and practices are all considered.