



miOttawa Department of  
**Public Health**

# Teen Deaths Caused By Suicide Ottawa County, MI

## 2008-2018\*

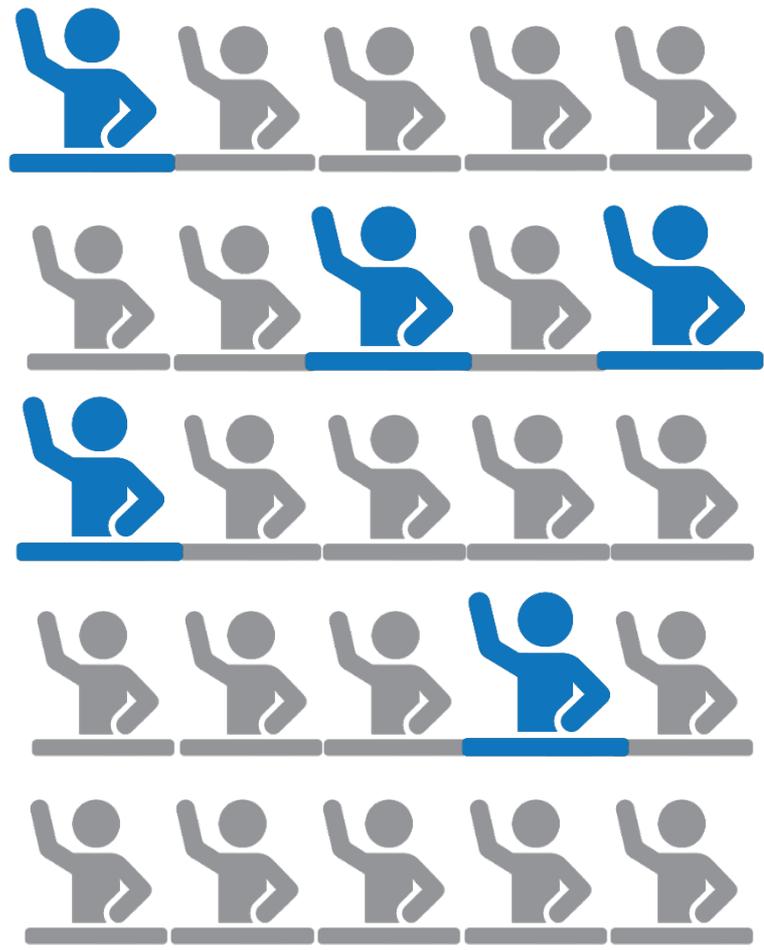
Sources: 2017 Ottawa County Youth Assessment Survey & Ottawa County Medical Examiner's Office, a program of OCDPH  
Compiled on June 29, 2018 by Marcia Mansaray, OCDPH Epidemiologist

Data on teen suicides in Ottawa County from 2008 to the mid-year point in 2018. The data is local and is from the Ottawa County Medical Examiner's Office and the [2017 Youth Assessment Survey](#) (completed by area teens in the fall of 2017). Changes in the characteristics of youth suicides and suicidal behaviors over the past decade are of public health concern and merit continued surveillance.

# This year, in each classroom of 25 students...

**5**  
seriously thought  
about  
taking their  
own life

and **2** made one or more attempts



Source: 2017 Ottawa County Youth Assessment Survey, "Q53: During the past 12 months, did you ever seriously think about attempting suicide?"  
"Q55: During the past 12 months, how many times did you attempt suicide?"

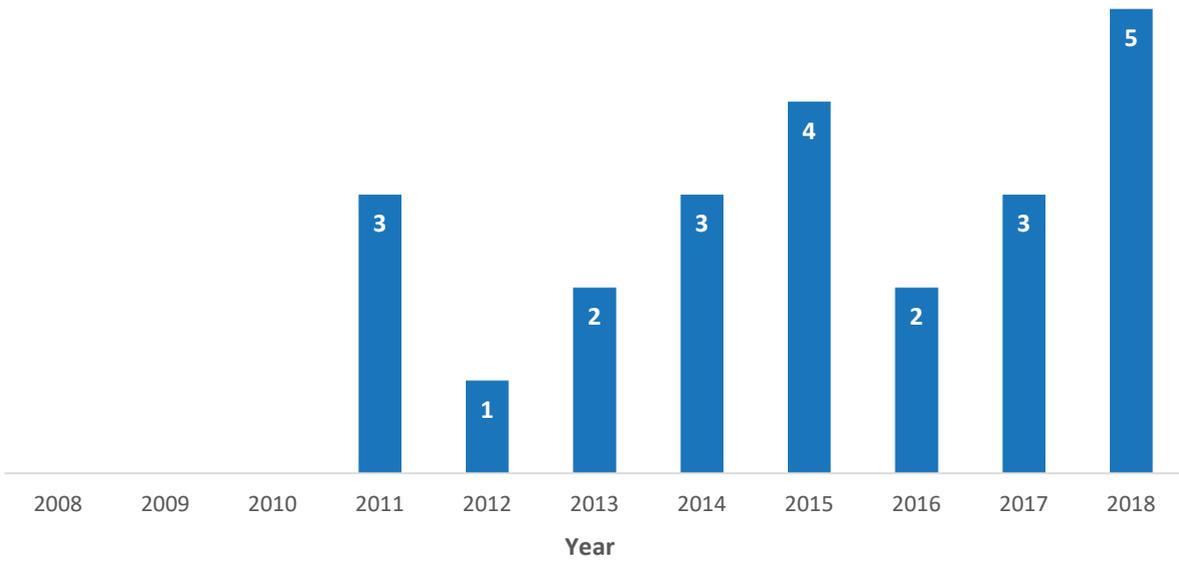
Every two years we ask Ottawa County teens if they have seriously thought about suicide in the past 12 months and how many times they have attempted suicide in the past year.

Almost 20% seriously thought about it and 8% said they attempted suicide one or more times in the past 12 months. On average, in every classroom of 13-18-year-olds...

- **Five seriously thought about taking their own life this past year.**
- **Of those five, two said they made one or more suicide attempts.**

# Suicide fatalities are occurring at younger ages\*

Figure 1. Suicide fatalities among Ottawa County teens\*



**12**  
teen suicides  
predicted for  
2018\*

**Of Note:**

Since 2008, the rate of suicide among youth under 20 has increased over 150% in Michigan.<sup>1</sup> The rate of suicide among Ottawa County teens is also increasing.<sup>2</sup> Of particular concern are suicides occurring at younger ages than previously seen. In the first six months of this year, 4 of 5 teens who took their own life were 16 years old and younger, a phenomenon that started in 2014 and has continued into 2018.

\*Numbers and rates for 2018 are for a partial year through June 2018 and are subject to change. The 2018 prediction is based on the ten-year average proportion of 40% teen suicide incidence in the first six months of a calendar year. <sup>1</sup> CDC Wonder Mortality Files at <https://wonder.cdc.gov/> <sup>2</sup> Ottawa County Medical Examiner's Office

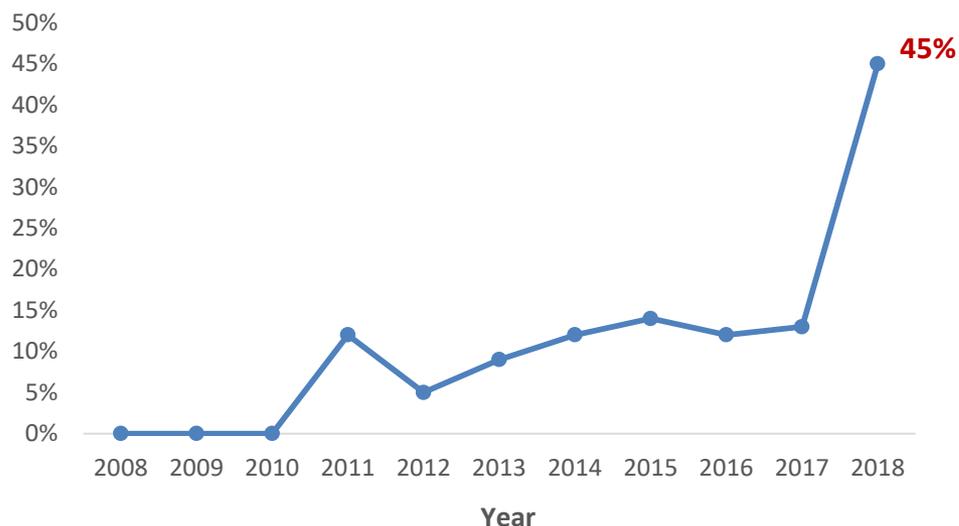
Since 2008, there is an overall trend of increasing suicides among teens 19 and younger. We are only halfway through 2018 and already have the highest number of teen deaths by suicide that we have ever seen. Four of those five deaths are teens 16-years-old and younger. We had not seen a suicide among young teens until 2014 and we have had one or more every year since.

If the trend this year continues, we could see as many as 12 teen deaths by suicide in 2018 – a steep and alarming increase.

NOTE: For the past decade there has not been a teen suicide in July or August.

# The proportion of suicides occurring among teens is increasing\*

**Figure 2.** Among all suicides, the proportion that are younger than 20 years of age\*



**Table 1.** Characteristics of teen suicides, 2008 to 2018\*

| TOTAL    | 13 | 10 |
|----------|----|----|
| Gun      | 6  | 1  |
| Hanging  | 6  | 6  |
| Overdose | 0  | 2  |
| Other    | 1  | 0  |

**Of Note:<sup>2</sup>**

The rate of suicide per 100,000 Ottawa County residents of **all ages** has been relatively stable for nearly 30 years. Despite this, the percentage of suicides under age 20 has been increasing. Of public health concern, five of twelve (45%) suicide fatalities through June 2018 are of Ottawa County youth ages 13-19. This is higher than would be expected in the first six months of the year. From 2008 to 2017, on average only 8% of all suicides in a year occurred in that age group. Since 2008, boys account for 59% of teen suicides and 52% of teen suicides have occurred in the SW quadrant of Ottawa County (south of Fillmore and west of 96<sup>th</sup>).

<sup>2</sup>Ottawa County Medical Examiner's Office.

\*Numbers and rates for 2018 are for a partial year through June 2018 and are subject to change.

In addition to seeing suicides among younger teens than ever before, there is an increase in the proportion of teens among all suicides. Typically, the last 7 years have had about 10-12% of all suicides occurring in teens. Halfway through this year, **45% of all suicides are of teenagers.**

**Over the past ten years:**

**59% have been boys**

**52% have occurred in the SW area of Ottawa County**

**52% have died by hanging – a method equally distributed among boys and girls.**

While the US. and Michigan are seeing an overall increase in suicides in general, Ottawa County's overall rate of suicide, when adjusted for our high rate of population growth, has been stable since 1990.

What is different, and very concerning, is the increase in suicides among younger and younger children.

NOTE: Limitations regarding location of death and notification of the county of residence for the deceased may have affected numbers prior to 2018 in an unknown way.