

OHIO SUICIDE PREVENTION FOUNDATION

Suicide Prevention in the Agricultural Community

Agriculture plays a vital role in Ohio's economy, with numerous family-run operations actively engaged in agricultural production. However, the profession is associated with considerable stress, affecting farmers' mental wellness.

Farming represents a significant sector in Ohio, boasting more than 76,000 farms, 95 percent of which are family-owned, and engaging over 130,000 men and women in agricultural production.¹

The challenges faced by farmers can significantly impact mental health. With unpredictable weather that impacts planting and harvest, low commodity prices, and increasing production costs, it's evident that the pressures of managing a family farm extend beyond physical labor.

A survey of Ohio's farming community highlights key stressors, such as the escalating costs of maintaining farmland that has often been part of a multigeneration family heritage, which add to the mental burden.² Moreover, the culture surrounding farming often discourages seeking mental health support, which can add to feelings of isolation and helplessness. This reality is alarming, especially considering that farmers are 3.5 times more likely to die by suicide than the general population, as reported by the National Rural Health Association.³

There is an urgent need to address these interconnected issues to improve the overall well-being of farmers and ensure they receive the support they need.

Warning Signs

One of the most effective ways to offer support is by staying alert to a farmer who may be struggling. Here are some warning signs to watch for:

- **A decline in the quality of care for their crops, animals, and farm**
- **An increase in farm accidents**
- **Uncharacteristic changes in routine**
- **Talking or posting about wanting to die**
- **Expressing feelings of being a burden**
- **Increased substance misuse**
- **Exhibiting extreme mood swings**
- **Isolating themselves**
- **Giving away prized possessions**

Resources

Rural and Farm Stress: Ohio State University's College of Food, Agricultural, and Environmental Sciences provides resources for creating resilient farms and families. u.osu.edu/farmstress/

Farm State of Mind: The American Farm Bureau's campaign builds awareness to reduce stigma and provides access to information and resources that promote mental health wellness for farmers and ranchers. FarmStateofMind.org

Got Your Back: A grassroots campaign headed by the Ohio Department of Agriculture that includes information about stress management resources and support for Ohio's farm families. agri.ohio.gov/gotyourback

Life Side Ohio: A suicide prevention outreach dedicated to the firearms community to promote secure storage. lifesideohio.org

Ohio Mental Health Resource Guides: Developed by the Ohio State University's Center for Public Health Practice, in partnership with the College of Public Health students and Equitas Health Institute. u.osu.edu/cphp/ohio-mental-health-resource-guides

Protective Factors

Farmers possess strengths and protective factors that can help in building mental health resilience and wellbeing, including:²

- Strong sense of purpose and identity
- Close family connections and support
- Community support and engagement
- Experience and adaptability
- Connection to nature
- Connection to faith-based or spiritual communities

Reaching Farmers

There can be barriers to reaching farmers with mental health and wellness messaging, including those already mentioned, such as stigma and a busy lifestyle.

Some programs have found success by delivering mental health messages or services to farmers in non-traditional ways, including:⁴

- **Farm groups** like the Ohio Farm Bureau and commodity groups such as the Corn Growers Association are important partners for farmers. They often attend conferences, local meetings, or farm tours to learn about new techniques and industry news. These events are great opportunities to distribute educational materials or invite guest speakers to address mental health and wellness.
- **Potentially stressful locations**, like sale barns or farm auctions, can be significant stressors for farmers facing bankruptcy. These venues provide an opportunity for mental health professionals to offer support and distribute resources for farmers in crisis.
- **Personal and professional resources**, such as veterinarians, equipment dealers, and state and federal farm service agencies, are trusted partners. These relationships present opportunities for mental health professionals wanting to provide on-site services for farm families.



If you or someone you know is in crisis,
call or text 988 to be connected to a
trained professional.

References

- 1 United States Department of Agriculture, National Agricultural Statistics Service. Ohio County Profile – 2022 Census of Agriculture. Washington, DC: USDA; 2022. https://www.nass.usda.gov/Publications/AgCensus/2022/Online_Resources/County_Profiles/Ohio/cp99039.pdf. Accessed September 22, 2025.
- 2 The Ohio Agricultural Mental Health Alliance. Ohio Farmer Stress and Wellbeing Report. November 2024. <https://www.ohioruralhealth.org/upload/documents/farmstressreportnov24.pdf>. Accessed September 22, 2025.
- 3 Eisenreich R, Pollari C; National Rural Health Association. Addressing Higher Risk of Suicide Among Farmers in Rural America: Policy Brief. Washington, DC: NRHA; year not specified [cited 2025]. <https://www.ruralhealth.us/getmedia/98f1009e-5418-4c06-910c-cdbb965cdb2e/NRHA-Policy-Brief-Increases-in-Suicide-Rates-Among-Farmers-in-Rural-America.pdf>. Accessed September 22, 2025.
- 4 Rural Health Information Hub. Overview of Mental Health and Suicide Prevention for Farmers. Available from: <https://www.ruralhealthinfo.org/topics/farmer-mental-health>. Accessed September 23, 2025.

ABOUT

OHIO SUICIDE PREVENTION FOUNDATION

Ohio Suicide Prevention Foundation (OSPF) educates, advocates for, and builds connections and support for individuals, families, and communities to prevent suicide.



(614) 429-1528 / OhioSPF.org

