

Request for Resolution in Support of Suicide Prevention Barriers on Bridges over Narragansett Bay

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📎 2 attachments (364 KB)

RIDOH Suicides_by_bridge_5_24_23.pdf; RIDOH Data_request_bridges_update_5_23_23.pdf;

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To: The Honorable Town Councils of Barrington, Bristol and Warren

From: Denise Panichas, Executive Director, The Samaritans of Rhode Island

Subject: Council Resolutions in Support of Suicide Prevention Barriers on Bridges over Narragansett Bay

Dear Councilors:

On behalf of The Samaritans of RI, I am writing to request Town Council resolutions be approved and sent to the RI Legislature in support of the installation of suicide prevention barriers on the bridges over Narragansett Bay.

Every community in Bristol, Newport, Kent and Washington Counties has been touched by preventable suicides by falls from the unprotected Jamestown, Newport/Pell, Sakonnet and Mount Hope Bridges. As we all know, the loss of our fellow citizens and the impact on our family, friends, neighbors and co-workers is immeasurable and lasts a lifetime.

As you are aware, for the last several years, Senator Lou DiPalma and Representative Joseph Solomon, along with The Samaritans of RI and other local and statewide advocates, have been working toward the installation of suicide prevention barriers on the four bridges. While individual bills did not pass, funding was made available for engineering studies for the four bridges through the State Budget.

The story does not end with studies. We are far from the final design, manufacturing and installation – and saving lives.

For far too long the problem of suicides from our bridges has been ignored. While many challenges face our state and in particular, the East Bay and Newport areas, collectively, we cannot stop advocating until installation is complete.

Negativity cannot be an option. Good design can solve any problem. Barriers can be both creative and cost effective.

For your information, I am attaching RIDOH fact sheets relating to suicides from our bridges. I am also linking a Providence Journal commentary – about my personal experience with a potential bridge jumper from the Sakonnet.

In the world of public opinion, our nonprofit advocacy is small compared to resolutions from your individual town councils, each representing thousands of citizens in our state. Your resolutions will honor those we have lost, be a voice for the loved ones left behind and speak to the future of hope in your communities.

Resolutions should be emailed as soon as possible but hopefully no later than the end of April 2024.

Hearing dates have not been scheduled yet.

Subject line: (Town) Resolution in support of Suicide Prevention Barriers on Bridges over Narragansett Bay

Below are emails for the Senate and House Finance Committees and the legislative leadership.

HouseFinance@rilegislature.gov

SenateFinance@rilegislature.gov

rep-shekarchi@rilegislature.gov

sen-ruggerio@rilegislature.gov

Thank you.



Data Overview: The Rhode Island Violent Death Reporting System (RIVDRS) contains data on violent deaths (suicides, homicides, undetermined deaths) when an individual is pronounced dead in *Rhode Island*. Bridge-related suicides can have various mechanisms of death (fall, drowning) based on the manner of death determination that is made by the Medical Examiner. Bridge-related suicide deaths are identified where the injury location type was defined as 'bridge', or a bridge jump was referenced in the incident narrative. Bridge names are not reported in RIVDRS, however have been tracked since 2021 using data available from the Office of the State Medical Examiners (OSME). 2021 RIVDRS data were finalized in May 2023 and 2022-2023 data are considered preliminary and subject to change.

Small numbers: Counts of less than five have been suppressed per [RIDOH's Small Numbers Policy](http://health.ri.gov/publications/policies/SmallNumbersReporting.pdf) (<http://health.ri.gov/publications/policies/SmallNumbersReporting.pdf>) due to privacy and reliability concerns. Any future use of counts to construct proportions, rates, and other statistics is subject to reliability and privacy verifications. Race and ethnicity data are not shown in this report due to small numbers.

Table. Bridge-related suicide deaths occurring in Rhode Island, by bridge, 2021-2023 (as of May 23, 2023)*

Bridge Name	Number of Bridge-Related Suicide Deaths
<i>Jamestown Bridge</i>	<5
<i>Newport Pell Bridge</i>	5
<i>Mt. Hope Bridge</i>	5
<i>Sakonnet River Bridge</i>	<5
<i>Other (non-Narragansett Bay bridges)</i>	<5
Total	17

*Data obtained from Rhode Island Violent Death Reporting system (RIVDRS) and the Office of the State Medical Examiners (OSME). Bridge-related suicides occurring in Rhode Island identified when injury location type was defined as 'bridge', or a bridge jump was referenced in the incident narrative. Counts <5 are suppressed per RIDOH's small number policy. A total of 8 bridge-related suicides were identified in 2021 with no single bridge being reported more than 5 times. 2022 and 2023 data are preliminary and subject to change. Less than 5 bridge-related deaths have identified during 2023 as of 5/23/2023.



Rhode Island Violent Death Reporting System: Source for all violent death data in this report is Rhode Island Violent Death Reporting System (RIVDRS). Data reflect violent deaths (suicides, homicides, undetermined deaths) when an individual is pronounced dead *in Rhode Island*. The city or town where the death occurred can be different than the city or town where the individual was pronounced dead. If the location of the incident was not in Rhode Island or is unknown, the death is not usually included in a geographical count. Variations in unknown city of incident may impact trends. Rhode Island residents who died of a violent death outside of Rhode Island are not included.

Case Definitions: Data in this report reflect suicides that occurred in Rhode Island between 2012 and 2021 (10 most recent years of complete data). Bridge-related suicides were identified as suicides that occurred in Rhode Island from 2012-2021 where the injury location type was defined as 'bridge', or a bridge jump was referenced in the incident narrative.

Small numbers: Counts of less than five have been suppressed per [RIDOH's Small Numbers Policy](http://health.ri.gov/publications/policies/SmallNumbersReporting.pdf) (<http://health.ri.gov/publications/policies/SmallNumbersReporting.pdf>) due to privacy and reliability concerns. Any future use of counts to construct proportions, rates, and other statistics is subject to reliability and privacy verifications. Race and ethnicity data are not shown in this report due to small numbers.

Table 1. Suicides that occurred in Rhode Island, by year, 2012-2021.

Incident Year	Number of Suicides
2012	107
2013	136
2014	118
2015	124
2016	120
2017	132
2018	112
2019	130
2020	99
2021	121
Total	1,199

Table 2. Total suicides that occurred in Rhode Island, by weapon type, 2012-2021 combined.

Weapon Type	Total Suicides, 2012-2021	%
Firearm	304	25.4%
Sharp Instrument	40	3.3%
Poisoning	220	18.4%
Hanging, strangulation, suffocation	499	41.6%
Fall	70	5.8%
Drowning	38	3.2%
Other*	28	2.3%

*Other category includes deaths involving fire or burns, motor vehicles, and blunt instruments

Table 3. Total suicides that occurred in Rhode Island, where injury location type=Bridge, or a bridge jump was referenced in the incident narrative, 2012-2021.

Incident Year	Bridge-Related Suicides
2012	6
2013	5
2014	8
2015	7
2016	5
2017	<5
2018	<5
2019	5
2020	<5
2021	8
Total	54

Table 4. Total number and percent of suicides occurring in Rhode Island, by county where the injury occurred, 2012-2021*.

Injury County	Total Suicides, 2012-2021	%
Bristol	64	5.4%
Kent	187	15.7%
Newport	120	10.1%
Providence	648	54.3%
Washington	175	14.7%

*Cases with missing injury county (n=5) not included in totals.

Questions? Contact Jonathan Barkley

Jonathan.Barkley@health.ri.gov

Table 5. Total suicides that occurred in Rhode Island where injury location type=Bridge, or a bridge jump was referenced in the incident narrative, by county where injury occurred, 2012-2021.

Injury County	Total Bridge Suicides, 2012-2021
Bristol	12
Kent	<5
Newport	29
Providence	8
Washington	<5

Table 6. Total suicides that occurred in Rhode Island, by age group, 2012-2021.

Age Group	Total Suicides, 2012-2021	%
<35 years	306	25.5%
35-54 years	465	38.8%
55+ years	428	35.7%

Table 7. Total suicides that occurred in Rhode Island where injury location type=Bridge, or a bridge jump was referenced in the incident narrative, by age group, 2012-2021.

Age Group	Total Bridge Suicides, 2012-2021	%
<35 years	13	24.1%
35-54 years	23	42.6%
55+ years	18	33.3%

Table 8. Total suicides that occurred in Rhode Island, by sex, 2012-2021.

Sex	Total Suicides, 2012-2021	%
Male	900	75.1%
Female	299	24.9%

Table 9. Total suicides that occurred in Rhode Island where injury location type=Bridge, or a bridge jump was referenced in the incident narrative, by sex, 2012-2021.

Sex	Total Bridge Suicides, 2012-2021	%
Male	42	77.8%
Female	12	22.2%

Questions? Contact Jonathan Barkley
Jonathan.Barkley@health.ri.gov