Suicide prevention efforts in the United States started in the 1950s, through the pioneering efforts of a small group of dedicated clinicians interested in better understanding suicide and its prevention. These early efforts were expanded upon in the 1980s with the support and passion of individuals who had been bereaved by a suicide loss. With limited funding and formal organization, these individuals and their grassroots organizations set out to place suicide on the national agenda. Their combined efforts over time culminated with the release of the 2001 National Strategy for Suicide Prevention. These dedicated advocates, organizations, and communities have remained at the forefront of suicide prevention activities nationwide.
1986: Suicide Prevention Advocacy Network USA (SPAN USA) founded.


1992: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) publishes Youth Suicide Prevention Programs: A Resource Guide.


1997: The Jason Foundation, Inc. is founded.

1997: Congress passes S. Res. 84 and H. Res. 212 recognizing suicide as a national problem; CDC establishes National Center for Injury Prevention and Control.

1997: Organization for Attempters and Survivors of Suicide in Interfaith Services (OASSIS) founded.

1999: First National Survivors of Suicide Day held.

1999: National Hopeline Network (1-800-SUICIDE) launched.

1999: HHS publishes The Surgeon General’s Call to Action to Prevent Suicide.


1999: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) funds national crisis line.


2000: OASSIS sponsors first National Interfaith Conference on Religion and Suicide.


2003: President’s New Freedom Commission on Mental Health publishes Achieving the Promise: Transforming Mental Health Care in America.

2004: Garrett Lee Smith Memorial Act signed into law creating the state, tribal, and campus suicide prevention grant programs.

2006: Federal Working Group on Suicide Prevention formed.


2010: National Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention established.


2007: Joshua Omvig Veterans Suicide Prevention Act signed into law.

2007: The Veterans Suicide Prevention Hotline founded.

2007: Joint Commission publishes Patient Safety Goals on Suicide, making suicide prevention one of its standards for accreditation.

2011: The Department of Defense establishes the Defense Suicide Prevention office (DSPO).