



Rational Suicide, Irrational Laws: Examining Current Approaches to Suicide in Policy and Law (American Psychology-Law Society Series)

Susan Stefan

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When should we try to prevent suicide? Should it be facilitated for some people, in some circumstances? For the last forty years, law and policy on suicide have followed two separate and distinct tracks: laws aimed at preventing suicide and, increasingly, laws aimed at facilitating it.

In *Rational Suicide, Irrational Laws* legal scholar Susan Stefan argues that these laws co-exist because they are based on two radically disparate conceptions of the would-be suicide. This is the first book that unifies policies and laws, including constitutional law, criminal law, malpractice law, and civil commitment law, toward people who want to end their lives. Based on the author's expert understanding of mental health and legal systems, analysis of related national and international laws and policy, and surveys and interviews with more than 300 suicide-attempt survivors, doctors, lawyers, and mental health professionals, *Rational Suicide, Irrational Laws* exposes the counterproductive nature of current policies and laws about suicide. Stefan proposes and defends specific reforms, including increased protection of mental health professionals from liability, increased protection of suicidal people from coercive interventions, reframing medical involvement in assisted suicide, and focusing on approaches to suicidal people that help them rather than assuming suicidality is always a symptom of mental illness. Stefan compares policies and laws in different states in the U.S. and examines the policies and laws of other countries in Europe, Asia, and the Americas, including the 2015 legalization of assisted suicide in Canada. The book includes model statutes, seven in-depth studies of people whose cases presented profound ethical, legal, and policy dilemmas, and over a thousand cases interpreting rights and responsibilities relating to suicide, especially in the area of psychiatric malpractice.

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