

Resources - Suicide Prevention

Tiers 1, 2 & 3

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Shir Palmon, Elisabeth Kane and Reece L. Peterson, University of Nebraska- Lincoln.

A variety of suicide prevention programs exist to help schools lower suicide rates. The programs vary in these factors: time to implement, who leads the program (expert or teacher), who is involved in the program (in the school and home), age/grade levels that are appropriate with the program, and requirements to be trained in the program. The programs listed below were chosen because they are evidence based and were cited in the literature. Each intervention included is outlined with a description of the age groups suitable for the intervention, cost, and who needs to be involved.

School District Policies

Model Policy. District Model Policy [on suicide] is a document put out by the Trevor Project, the National Association of School Psychologists, the American School Counselor Association, and the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention. Within the document are definitions and resources, along with other relevant information, from bullying and suicide to parental involvement. The website contains other resources as well.

<http://www.thetrevorproject.org/pages/modelschoolpolicy>

Prevention Programs

Mobile Application

Suicide Safe is a new mobile application offered through SAMHSA.gov, and is free for health care providers. This application helps providers integrate suicide prevention strategies into their practice. The application is based on SAMHSA's Suicide Assessment Five Step Evaluation and Triage (SAFE-T). More information can be found online at <http://store.samhsa.gov/apps/suicide-safe/> or by downloading the application on your phone or tablet.

Intervention Programs

Suitable for Implementation in School Settings

The descriptions below are adapted from materials on the SAMHSA intervention website at: <http://www.samhsa.gov/nrepp>. This website lists interventions which have been reviewed by the National Registry of Evidence-Based Programs and Practices (NREPP). Interventions that can be used in school settings were chosen and briefly described below. To find more information about each intervention, click the link above, then select "find an intervention by keyword" and type in "suicide prevention." A toolkit has been published for more information on preventing suicide for high schools, and can be found at <http://store.samhsa.gov/shin/content//SMA12-4669/SMA12-4669.pdf>.

American Indian Life Skills Development/Zuni Life Skills Development

American Indian Life Skills Development (the currently available version of the former Zuni Life Skills Development program) is a school-based suicide prevention curriculum addressing the reduction of suicide risk and improving protective factors among American Indian adolescents 14 to 19 years old. The curriculum includes anywhere from 28 to 56 lesson plans covering topics such as building self-esteem, identifying emotions and stress, increasing communication and problem-solving skills, recognizing and eliminating self-destructive behavior, role-playing around suicide prevention, and setting personal and community goals. The curriculum typically is delivered over 30 weeks during the school year, with students participating in lessons 3 times per week. Lessons are interactive and incorporate situations and experiences relevant to American Indian adolescent life, such as dating, rejection, divorce, separation, unemployment, and problems with health and the law. Most of the lessons include brief, scripted scenarios that provide a chance for students to employ problem solving and apply the suicide-related knowledge they have learned. More information on the program can be found here: <http://alaskanativeyouth.org/wp-content/uploads/AmericanIndianLifeSkillsDevelopment.pdf>

Coping and Support Training (CAST)

CAST is a high school-based suicide prevention program targeting youth 14 to 19 years old. CAST delivers life-skills training and social support in a small-group format (6-8 students per group). The program consists of twelve 55-minute group sessions administered over 6 weeks by trained high school teachers, counselors, or nurses with considerable school-based experience. CAST serves as a follow-up program for youth who have been identified through screening as being at significant risk for suicide. CAST's skills training sessions focus on three overall goals: increased mood management (depression and anger), improved school performance, and decreased drug involvement. Sessions emphasize group support, goal setting and monitoring, self-esteem, decision making skills, better management of anger and depression, "school smarts," control of drug use with relapse prevention, and self-recognition of progress through the program. Each session helps youth apply newly acquired skills and increase support from family and other trusted adults. Every session ends with "Lifework" assignments that call for the youth to practice the session's skills with a specific person in their school, home, or peer-group environment. More information on the program can be found here: <http://www.reconnectingyouth.com/programs/cast/>

Kognito At-Risk for High School Educators

Kognito At-Risk for High School Educators is a 1-hour, online, interactive gatekeeper training program that prepares high school teachers and other school personnel to identify, approach, and refer students who are exhibiting signs of psychological distress such as depression, anxiety, substance abuse, and suicidal ideation. Through a self-paced, narrative-driven experience, participants build knowledge, skills, and confidence to connect at-risk students to counseling, mental health, or crisis support services. By engaging in a role-play practice conversation with fully animated and emotionally responsive student avatars that act and respond like real humans, participants learn effective communication tactics for managing these challenging conversations. The course also works to reduce stigma around mental health issues by normalizing mental health disorders and increase protective factors by improving social connectedness. Kognito has specific modules for elementary, middle and high school settings. For more information about this program go to: <https://www.kognito.com/products/pk12/>

LEADS: For Youth (Linking Education and Awareness of Depression and Suicide)

LEADS: For Youth is a curriculum for high school students in grades 9-12 that is designed to increase knowledge of depression and suicide, modify perceptions of depression and suicide, increase knowledge of suicide prevention resources, and improve intentions to engage in help-seeking behaviors. The curriculum addresses such topics as depression and its symptoms, the link between depression and suicide, the risk and protective factors associated with suicide, the warning signs of suicide, and how to seek help and overcome barriers to seeking help, and school and community suicide prevention resources. By educating students about seeking help and the resources available to them, the intervention aims to empower students to get help for themselves or others. Teachers implement the curriculum for 1 hour a day over a 3-day period. Each session includes a classroom lecture, individual and group activities, and small-group discussions, followed by activities and homework outside of school. More information can be found on the program here: http://www.save.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=home.viewPage&page_id=45DFBB66-7E90-9BD4-CEB81505D25E7ED1



Lifelines Curriculum

Lifelines is a comprehensive, school-wide suicide prevention program for middle and high school students. The goal of Lifelines is to promote a caring, competent school community in which help seeking is encouraged and modeled and suicidal behavior is recognized as an issue that cannot be kept secret. Lifelines seeks to increase the likelihood that school staff and students will know how to identify at-risk youth when they encounter them, provide an appropriate initial response, and obtain help, as well as be inclined to take such action. Lifeline consists of four 45-minute or two 90-minute lessons that incorporate elements of the social development model and employ interactive teaching techniques, including role-play. Health teachers and/or guidance counselors teach the lessons within the regular school health curriculum. The Lifelines Curriculum was developed specifically for students in grades 8-10 but can be used with students through 12th grade. More information is available here: <http://www.hazelden.org/web/public/lifelines.page>

QPR Gatekeeper Training for Suicide Prevention

The QPR (Question, Persuade, and Refer) Gatekeeper Training for Suicide Prevention is a brief educational program designed to teach “gatekeepers”—those who are strategically positioned to recognize and refer someone at risk of suicide (e.g., parents, friends, neighbors, teachers, coaches, caseworkers, police officers)—the warning signs of a suicide crisis and how to respond by following three steps:

- Question the individual’s desire or intent regarding suicide
- Persuade the person to seek and accept help
- Refer the person to appropriate resources

The 1- to 2-hour training is delivered by certified instructors in person or online, and it covers (1) the epidemiology of suicide and current statistics, as well as myths and misconceptions about suicide and suicide prevention; (2) general warning signs of suicide; and (3) the three gatekeeper skills (i.e., question, persuade, refer). Any adult (18 years or older) can become a certified instructor after receiving a minimum of 8 hours of formal instruction. After completing this instruction, the instructor is certified for 3 years, although annual booster sessions are recommended. Certified instructors are provided with technical and Web-based support, newsletters, and free program upgrades. QPR has a comprehensive website with plenty of information. It can be found here: <https://www.qprinstitute.com/about-qpr>

Reconnecting Youth: A Peer Group Approach to Building Life Skills (RY)

Reconnecting Youth is a school-based prevention program for students ages 14-19 years that teaches skills to build resiliency against risk factors and control early signs of substance abuse and emotional distress. RY targets youth who demonstrate poor school achievement and high potential for school dropout. Eligible students must have either (1) fewer than the average number of credits earned for all students in their grade level at their school, high absenteeism, and a significant drop in grades during the prior semester or (2) a record of dropping out of school. Potential participants are identified using a school's computer records or are referred by school personnel if they show signs of any of the above risk factors. Eligible students may show signs of multiple problem behaviors, such as substance abuse, aggression, depression, or suicidal ideation. RY was created by the same people who created CAST. More information is available here: <http://www.reconnectingyouth.com/programs/reconnecting-youth>

SOS Signs of Suicide

SOS Signs of Suicide is a secondary school-based suicide prevention program that includes screening and education. Students are screened for depression and suicide risk and referred for professional help as indicated. Students also view a video that teaches them to recognize signs of depression and suicide in themselves and others. They are taught that the appropriate response to these signs is to use the ACT technique: acknowledge that there is a problem, let the person know you care, and tell a trusted adult. Students also participate in guided classroom discussions about suicide and depression. The program aims to prevent suicide attempts, increase knowledge about suicide and depression, develop desirable attitudes toward suicide and depression, and increase help-seeking behavior among youth ages 13-18. More information on the program is here: <https://mentalhealthscreening.org/programs/youth>

Sources of Strength

Sources of Strength, a universal suicide prevention program, is designed to build socioecological protective influences among youth to reduce the likelihood that vulnerable high school students will become suicidal. The program trains students as peer leaders and connects them with adult advisors at school and in the community. With support from the advisors, the peer leaders conduct well-defined messaging activities intended to change peer group norms influencing coping practices and problem behaviors (e.g., self-harm, drug use, unhealthy sexual practices). Specifically, these activities are designed to reduce the acceptability of suicide as a response to distress, increase the acceptability of seeking help, improve communication between youth and adults, and develop healthy coping attitudes among youth. Depending on the size of the high school, 10-50 students are recruited through staff and student nominations to form a team of peer leaders, who are mentored by 2-5 adult advisors. Certified Sources of Strength trainers provide the peer leaders with an initial 4-hour interactive training, which the adult advisors also must attend. Adult advisors facilitate peer leader meetings over 3-4 months to plan, design, and practice tailored messaging activities. Sources of Strength has a comprehensive website which can be found here: <https://sourcesofstrength.org/>

Postvention Programs

Local Outreach to Suicide Survivors

The LOSS Team (Local Outreach to Suicide Survivors) is an active postvention strategy, which includes trained survivors of suicide going to the sites where suicide occurred as a resource for the people involved, often family members who are most affected by the loss. The LOSS Team members offer supports in the wake of the suicide and offers community resources to the bereaved. LOSS Team members provide follow-up care to the survivors upon request. The LOSS Team is contacted by the law enforcement at the scene of a suicide (LOSS Team, n.d.). The LOSS team can also provide community support to schools, workplaces, etc. upon request.

Programs for Mental Health Agencies

Assessing and Managing Suicide Risk

Outpatient behavioral health providers play a crucial role in preventing suicides. Studies have shown that a substantial proportion of people who died by suicide had either been in treatment or had some recent contact with a mental health professional. Yet many providers report they feel inadequately trained to assess, treat, and manage suicidal patients or clients. *Assessing & Managing Suicide Risk: Core Competencies for Mental Health Professionals* meets providers' need for research-informed, competency-based training. <http://www.sprc.org/training-institute/amr>

The Collaborative Assessment and Management of Suicidality (CAMS)

The Collaborative Assessment and Management of Suicidality (CAMS) is a structured evidence-based method for risk assessment and treatment planning (Jobes, 2006). CAMS is a relatively new therapeutic clinical framework that endeavors to address a number of challenges. The CAMS approach has applied and adapted seminal work which pioneered innovative ways of thinking about suicidal states with related implications for clinical care. Practical clinical tools are offered as part of the course which is available in a four hour online interactive format. It is most appropriate for professionals engaged in treating someone who is at risk for suicide. <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3752846/>

Suicide Prevention Resource Center (SPRC)

The SPRC is an online resource which gives information on news and events, trainings for suicide prevention, a list of best practices, and a free library and resource section. This is a great tool for anyone looking for more information on suicide prevention. <http://www.sprc.org/>

Conclusion

There are many programs available for suicide prevention, and schools should choose programs based on the best fit for their school. Prevention programs are usually used as a tier one intervention and to seek out those students who would benefit from a tier two intervention. Postvention programs are used after a suicide has occurred to help friends and family cope.

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See also the Related Strategy Brief:

For an explanation of the problem of youth suicide and an overview of suicide reduction program components, see the Strategy Brief on Suicide Prevention at: <http://k12engagement.unl.edu/suicide-prevention>.

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