After Rural Suicide
A Guide For Coordinated Community Response
Anara Guard and Sandra Black
Logistics

- All participants are muted

- To ask questions:
  - Locate green tab at top of screen – hover mouse to drops down to show options
  - Click Q & A box, type question and SEND to Presenter

- Webinar is being recorded and will be available on the CIBHS web site
  - http://www.cibhs.org
Today’s Webinar

- History and background of the Guide
- Section I: Before a suicide occurs
- Section II: The postvention response
- Section III: Tools
- Section IV: Resources
- Suggestions for use
- Questions?
History

- Request from Tahoe Truckee Suicide Prevention Coalition
- Interest and support from Central Region Mental Health Services Act Workforce Education & Training Program
- Side by side creation of a postvention plan tailored for the Tahoe Truckee region and a Guide that can be used in any community
- Today’s webinar will focus on the Guide
POSTVENTION: intervention after a suicide, offering support for those affected by the death
Goals of Postvention

- Support healing of the individuals affected (loss survivors) and of the community at large;

- Offer support to at-risk individuals and reduce the likelihood of additional attempts or deaths (contagion);

- Help individuals and organizations respond promptly and appropriately; and

- Offer messaging and activities to help educate the community about suicide prevention
Why a *rural* postvention guide?

- High rates of suicide in rural areas
  - Risk factors in rural life
- Strong and overlapping social networks
- Limited resources and access to services
  - Fewer mental health and other resources
  - Geography and distance
- No other such resource exists!
Purpose of the Guide

- Assist in the development of a coordinated, customized, local plan to guide postvention response
- Created with rural communities in mind, but also useful in other communities
- Provides a framework for monitoring a situation as it unfolds to reduce contagion risk and increase support to those who need it
- What it is not
Elements of a Postvention Plan

- Support for Loss Survivors
- Annual review to learn and improve
- Reduced trauma
- Prevention messaging and education
- Accurate information
- Appropriate responses
Supporting Loss Survivors

- Suicide Exposed
- Suicide Affected
- Suicide Bereaved Short term
- Suicide Bereaved Long term
Section I: Before a suicide occurs
Developing the postvention plan
Engaging key stakeholders

- Identify the community that will be served by the plan
- Reach out early to open dialogue and secure buy-in
- Discuss what information will – and won’t – be shared
- Air and address concerns and limitations
- Form relationships
- Create formal agreements if needed
First Responders

• Primary source of timely information about a death

• Law enforcement and the Coroner need to be engaged and fully participating

• Emphasize how a postvention plan will augment, rather than interfere with their work

• Advocate for timely sharing of information about a death (ideally within 24 hours)

• Determine if formal agreements are needed
Examples of Key Stakeholders

Coroner
Law enforcement (including Chaplains)
Behavioral health providers (public or private)
Crisis centers
Loss survivors
Schools
Chaplains and clergy
Funeral directors and/or funeral chapels
Primary care providers
Hospital and emergency room staff
Leaders and/or healers from culturally diverse communities
The role of the suicide prevention coalition

- Create or engage a coalition early
- Ensuring community needs are addressed
- Form and activate partnerships
- Oversight and guidance
- Translating findings and lessons learned into prevention strategies
Gather information

- What does suicide look like in your community?
- What happens after a suicide death? (What does NOT happen?)
- What formal response plans are in place?
The Core Team

- Central drivers of the plan
- 1-3 individuals carefully chosen
  - Behavioral health representation
  - Skilled in grief counseling
  - Willing to share contact information
- Primary contact with first responders, news media, the public, and others impacted by the death
Tasks of the Core Team

- Receive information about a suicide death from first responders
- Coordinate response steps
- Connect loss survivors with services and supports
- Serve as “go to” resource
- Monitor contagion risk and response level
- Coordinate with suicide prevention coalition and key partners
Inventory of services and supports

- Develop a list of supports and services for survivors
- Include a range of options
- Over time, identify and work to address any unmet needs
Offering loss support

- Create a card or brochure
  - Include contact information for a Core Team member
  - Provide a supply to first responders, other providers
- Community suicide prevention web site
  - Include resources for loss survivors
  - Always include how to reach Suicide Prevention Lifeline and/or local crisis center
Plan for public communication

- Not to share details about a death, but to promote information on suicide prevention and resources
- Having a public statement drafted in advance allows for rapid use
- Develop a plan for working with the media
- Guide includes a template public statement and links to resources for working with the media
Section II: The Postvention Response
Community Response Process

1. Notify Core Team
2. Offer Support
3. Gather more info
4. Mobilize others as needed
5. Offer support
6. Review and learn

Cycle:
- Notify Core Team to mobilize others as needed.
- Mobilize others as needed to offer support.
- Offer support to gather more info.
- Gather more info to review and learn.
- Review and learn to notify core team again.
Steps in ALL deaths

- Establish, confirm, and document facts and circumstances
- Mobilize and offer support
- Communicate carefully
- Determine if a broader community response is needed
Timely notification?

- A postvention plan can still be effective even if early notification from first responders is not feasible

- Steps outlined in the Guide may be implemented from whatever point the Core Team learns of a death

- Start where you are; over time, earlier notification may become more possible
When is a community-wide response needed?

- A public event
- Suicide of a well-known figure
- Subject of extensive media or social media coverage
- Homicide/suicide
- When more than one suicide occurs in an unusually short time frame
Broader response levels

- Core Team works with key stakeholders to determine if community-wide or targeted response is needed
- Targeted responses may be helpful when a death disproportionately impacts a sector of the community
Options for community response

- Public meeting or forum
- Prevention training
- Public statement or public health alert
- Monitoring and responding to media
- Disseminating materials
Suicide Prevention training considerations

- Use caution when deploying training in the immediate aftermath of a death
- Sensitivity to survivors, inadvertent messaging of blame
- Strategically plan training as part of a larger prevention planning process
Planning for Prevention

- Postvention is integrally linked to prevention
- Review implementation of the postvention plan
- Examine data
- Develop strategic prevention strategies
Lessons learned with Tahoe Truckee

- Relationships are crucial
- “The devil is in the details”
- First responders need to see the benefits
- Know what is available in order to offer it
- Support must be mobilized, not just available
- Families come first
Section III: Tools
## Master Checklist

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TASK</th>
<th>ACTIONS</th>
<th>WHO?</th>
<th>Comments and Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Establish, confirm and document facts and circumstances. Ideally determine: Name, age, gender, method, location of death or where body found, contact information for loss survivors and witnesses. Also useful are: race/ethnicity, marital status, family information, employment, veteran/military status, health and mental health history.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Designated Core Team member contacts the other member(s) of the Core Team to share information and coordinate responses. Core Team holds daily debrief for duration of the incident’s impact to outline next steps, assign tasks, and support one another.</td>
<td></td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Mobilize support to those directly affected Verify that loss survivors and witnesses are provided card, brochure or information packet Talk to first responders (and law enforcement chaplains if applicable) to determine if loss survivors and witnesses agreed to being contacted and to learn any other information about survivor needs. If yes, reach out to loss survivors and witnesses to offer condolences and navigate support options.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
CONFIDENTIALITY STATEMENT FOR THE ___________ COUNTY SUICIDE COMMUNITY RESPONSE CORE TEAM

The purpose of the Suicide Community Response Core Team is to provide immediate and ongoing support to county residents affected by a suicide death, and to ensure that accurate information is available to agencies as needed. In order to assure a coordinated response that fully addresses all systemic concerns surrounding suicide deaths, the Core Team may be privy to existing records, such as autopsy reports, mental health records, hospital or medical related data, and other sensitive information that may have a bearing on supporting loss survivors, witnesses, first responders, and other affected community members.

With this purpose in mind, I the undersigned, as a representative of

____________________________________________________________

agree that all materials and information, whether oral or written, received by this team shall remain confidential and shall not be used for any other purpose or be disclosed to any person or entity except as authorized by law.

____________________________________________________________

PRINT NAME

____________________________________________________________

SIGNATURE

____________________________________________________________

DATE

____________________________________________________________

WITNESS
Loss survivors brochure

What Helps

People who have experienced a suicide loss have shared what has helped them.

* Reassure the child that they will be cared for and you will be there for them. Tell them that even though you may feel sad right now, you will not always feel that way.

* Work at understanding that you have experienced a traumatic loss.

* Be patient in allowing yourself your reactions and feelings of grief.

* Seek out those persons who give you comfort.

* Avoid or limit contact with people who complicate your grief or tell you how to feel.

* It’s okay to let people know what you do and do not want to talk about; they may have questions but you do not have to satisfy their curiosity.

* Practice self-care along with caring for others.

* Gain information and skills through reading and using available resources.

* Discuss your feelings and responses with other loss survivors, such as in a support group.

Local Resources
[add local resources here]

Crisis Resources

Emergency Response: 9 1 1
Local Crisis Line: [ ]

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline:
(800) 273-8255 [TALK]
Red Nacional de Prevención del Suicidio:
(888) 628-9454 (Spanish)

Regional Resources

Compassionate Friends: (877) 969-0010
www.compassionatefriends.org

Friends for Survival: (916) 392-0664
www.friendsforsurvival.org

Hope and Help After a Suicide

[add URL here]
[Add logo]
Additional Tools

- Coroner’s condolence letter example
- Considerations for community meetings
- Community meeting agenda example
- Sample public statement
- Public health alert example
Section IV: Resources
Categories

- Postvention resources, plans, and training
- Survivor support (individuals and organizations) and creating programs for loss survivors
- Planning memorials and funerals
- Support for broad community response and targeted response options
- Media and social media response
- Prevention planning
Where to find the Guide

- Free download from the California Institute for Behavioral Health Solutions web site (http://www.cibhs.org/publication/after-rural-suicide)

- With any questions on the Guide, please contact Gina Ehlert:
  
  gehlert@cibhs.org
  Phone: 916.317.3705
Questions?

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August 2016

Developed by the California Mental Health Services Authority (CalMHSA) on behalf of and funded by the Central Region Workforce Education & Training Program of the Mental Health Services Act and by Placer County.
Thank you!

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