Mental Health/Suicide Prevention: Are We Communicating the Right Message?
24th Annual Legal Issues in Higher Education Conference, Monday October 13, 2014, 1:00 pm–2:15 pm
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Overview of Session Content
- Why changing suicide prevention messaging is a national priority: content that is potentially unsafe and unhelpful.
- New research-based guidance outlining best practices for creating more successful suicide prevention messages.
- Where to start? Developing messaging as part of a comprehensive approach to suicide prevention and mental health promotion.
- Additional resources for campus suicide prevention and mental health promotion.

Featured Resource
National Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention Framework for Successful Messaging
SuicidePreventionMessaging.org

The Framework for Successful Messaging is a comprehensive web-based resource that outlines four critical issues to consider when messaging to the public about suicide. It was created by the National Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention as part of its focus on changing the public conversation about suicide.

- **Strategy** involves planning and focusing messages, so they are as effective as possible. It is “at the center” of all successful messaging.
- **Safety** is avoiding content that is unsafe or undermines prevention.
- **Positive Narrative** means ensuring that our collective voice is “promoting the positive” in the form of actions, solutions, successes, or resources.
- **Guidelines** means using any specific guidance or best practices that apply.
Resources

Communications
- Communications Planning: list of top picks
  - Go the Framework site (SuicidePreventionMessaging.org), click on “Strategy,” then select “Strategy Resources” from the left-hand menu


- To share with the media: Recommendations for Reporting on Suicide, http://reportingonsuicide.org/


Suicide Prevention & Mental Health Promotion: Resources for Colleges and Universities

CREATING A COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

SPRC’s Suicide Prevention Guidance for Colleges and Universities
http://www.sprc.org/collegesanduniversities
Website sections include Campus Data, Developing a Campus Program, Campus Examples, and Resources and Research.

SPRC/Jed Foundation Comprehensive Approach to Suicide Prevention and Mental Health Promotion
http://www.sprc.org/collegesanduniversities/comprehensive-approach
This model outlines seven key strategies that campuses can undertake as part of a comprehensive approach to suicide prevention and mental health promotion.

CampusMHAP: Mental Health Action Planning
Series of 4 webinars: http://www.jedfoundation.org/professionals/programs-and-research/campusMHAP-webinars

A Strategic Planning Approach to Suicide Prevention (Online Training)
http://training.sprc.org/
This interactive online course helps program planners to identify and prioritize activities that will be effective in addressing suicide in their community. It uses three fictional task forces to illustrate the approach “in action.” While focused on professionals working at the state or local level, campus prevention professionals can apply the same steps when planning campus-based suicide prevention efforts.

The guide serves as a resource to help existing and new campus crisis response teams make informed decisions about their structure, scope, functions and day-to-day operations.
Active Minds: http://www.activeminds.org/
Active Minds is a national organization that empowers students to speak openly about mental health in order to educate others and encourage help-seeking. They develop and support chapters of a student-run mental health awareness, education, and advocacy group on campuses nationwide to increase knowledge about mental health issues, provide information and resources regarding mental health and mental illness, encourage students to seek help as soon as it is needed, and serve as liaison between students and the mental health community.

PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION STRATEGIES

Best Practices Registry for Suicide Prevention (BPR): http://www.sprc.org/bpr
The BPR was developed collaboratively by the Suicide Prevention Resource Center and the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention. It has three sections: (1) evidence-based programs (evaluation demonstrated positive outcomes); (2) protocols for program and policy development; and (3) programs and practices whose content has been reviewed for accuracy, likelihood of meeting objectives, and adherence to program design standards.

SAMHSA’s National Registry of Evidence-based Programs and Practices: http://nrepp.samhsa.gov/
NREPP is SAMHSA’s online registry of interventions that have demonstrated effectiveness in the prevention or treatment of mental health and substance use disorders, including some interventions that address suicide. While NREPP is independent of the BPR, all suicide-related interventions listed in NREPP are also included in Section I of the BPR (see BPR listing above.)

This webinar was part of a series of trainings for campuses newly funded as SAMHSA grantees. This webinar highlighted key considerations for developing or revising campus crisis protocols, and legal considerations for student mental health. Presenters were Julia Graff, Staff Attorney from the Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law, and M. Dolores Cimini (University of Albany, alumni grantee).

Student Mental Health and the Law http://www.jedfoundation.org/professionals/programs-and-research/legal-resource
Note that this guide was published in 2008 and therefore some content is likely out of date. However, it may still serve as a helpful overview of key legal issues that arise in addressing campus mental health and working with students in distress.

Reducing a suicidal persons’ immediate access to highly lethal means is one component of a comprehensive approach to reducing suicide risk. Presenters review the evidence for this approach and share examples from two campus communities that have successfully implemented means restriction strategies, such as a medication take-back program and limiting access to tall structures.

Means Matter Campaign (Harvard School of Public Health) http://www.hsph.harvard.edu/means-matter/
This is the “go-to” website for information about strategies to reduce access to highly lethal means among suicidal individuals. It includes research, program examples, online courses, action steps, and many other resources.
Choosing and Implementing a Suicide Prevention Gatekeeper Training Program (SPRC Online Course)
http://training.sprc.org/
One of the most commonly used suicide prevention activities is gatekeeper training. This course is designed to help participants understand the role of gatekeeper training; decide if a gatekeeper training program is right for their school, organization, or community; involve stakeholders; choose, implement, and evaluate a gatekeeper training program; and provide ongoing support to sustain the program.

Connectedness & Suicide Prevention in College Settings: Directions and implications for practice
This paper takes a closer look at connectedness and four components of a connectedness framework. It also includes intervention implications for suicide prevention on college campuses.

American Foundation for Suicide Prevention’s Interactive Screening Program
http://www.afsp.org/the-interactive-screening-program
This program offers a way for campuses to implement an anonymous online screening questionnaire and connect students to help. Responses to the web-based questionnaire are submitted and scored to determine the person's level of risk. Counselors on the campus review the answers and provide an individualized response, opening the door to an anonymous online dialogue that can help to connect individuals with the help they need. There is a program fee to set up and sustain this program.

ULifeline Self-Evaluator
http://www.ulifeline.org/self_evaluator
This is an anonymous online resource for students, which includes a confidential screening tool and help with locating resources on a student’s campus.

SUICIDE “POSTVENTION” (Responding to a suicide attempt or death)

SPRC Online Library: Postvention and Crisis Response resources
Numerous resources exist on postvention; however, most are not specific to college/university settings. To view resources on this topic
- go to the SPRC Online Library (http://www.sprc.org/search/library)
- click on the arrow to the left of Programmatic Issues to show the topic list
- Check the box for “Postvention and Crisis Response” and click the Search button at the top.
  - It will tell you to enter some keywords, but you can ignore that and just browse all the listings. Or you can enter keywords to narrow the search.

Also see Cimini et al., listed on the next page

SUICIDE BEREAVEMENT

Suicide Grief Support Quick Reference
Sg.sg/GriefReference
This comprehensive resource includes an introduction to suicide grief support (e.g., how to listen and respond, common experiences and reactions, indicators for professional referral), survivor resources, online support resources, and resources for caregivers.
SELECTED JOURNAL ARTICLES


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Presenter Bio

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Dr. Langford currently divides her time between projects at Langford & Associates, her own consulting practice, and the Suicide Prevention Resource Center (SPRC), based at Education Development Center, Inc. in Waltham, MA.

Linda has been working in prevention and health promotion for over 15 years. She specializes in effective prevention, strategic planning, and health communications, with special interests in violence prevention, environmental approaches to prevention, and translating research to practice.

From 1998-2012, she served as an Associate Director of the U.S. Department of Education’s Higher Education Center for Alcohol, Drug Abuse and Violence Prevention, developing a framework for violence prevention in higher education based on a public health approach that promotes systematic data-driven planning based on the best available science (email Linda for a copy.)

Her consulting work has included short- and long-term projects, including conducting campus prevention reviews, facilitating meetings, speaking engagements, and conducting trainings on an array of issues including “prevention 101,” strategic planning, logic models, bystander intervention, social norms, effective partnerships, hazing, sexual violence, the intersection of sexual violence and alcohol, and other topics.

Her recent SPRC work has included several efforts designed to promote safer and more effective messaging in suicide prevention, including overseeing the development of the National Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention’s Framework for Successful Messaging (www.SuicidePreventionMessaging.org), a resource that launched in June 2014.

Linda holds a doctorate in behavioral sciences from the Harvard School of Public Health.