

Aspiring to a Zero Suicide Mindset at Work: Research-based U.S. National Guidelines for Suicide Prevention and Postvention

Work & Family Researchers Network Conference

www.WorkplaceSuicidePrevention.com

Maggie G. Mortali, MPH, American Foundation for Suicide Prevention
Sally Spencer-Thomas, PsyD, United Suicide Survivors International
Jodi J. Frey, PhD, LCSW-C, University of Maryland



"The workplace is the last crucible of sustained human contact for many of the 30,000 people who kill themselves each year in the United States. A co-worker's suicide has a deep, disturbing impact on work mates. For managers, such tragedies pose challenges no one covered in management school."*

Sue Shellenbarger (2001)

Impact of Colleague's Suicide Is Strongly Felt in Workplace, *Wall Street Journal*

*In 2018, 48,344 people died by suicide



Presenters



Sally Spencer-Thomas

President, United Suicide Survivors International

Co-Chair, Workplace Prevention and Postvention Committee, American Association of Suicidology



Jodi Jacobson Frey

Professor, University of Maryland, Baltimore, School of Social Work
Co-Chair, Workplace Prevention and Postvention Committee, American Association of Suicidology



Maggie Mortali

Senior Program Director
American Foundation for Suicide Prevention



Partners



Session Objectives

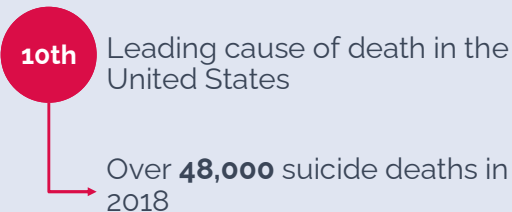
At the end of this presentation, participants will be able to:

1. List reasons why suicide prevention is a workplace health and safety priority.
2. Describe the essential elements of the National Guidelines for Workplace Suicide Prevention.
3. Take at least one action step towards building a sustained and comprehensive strategy for their workplace or professional association.

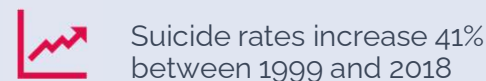
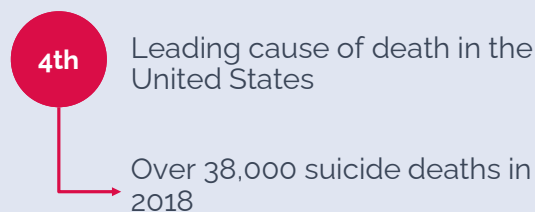


Overview – Scope of the Problem

General Population (All Americans)*



Working Age Population (Ages 16-64 years)**



*CDC, 2020

**Peterson et al., 2019



Suicide Rates* by Occupational Groups



*Suicide rates per 100,000 population

Peterson et al., 2020



Top 5 Major Occupational Groups

1. Construction & Extraction (Males/Females): **49.4 / 25.5**
2. Installation, Maintenance, & Repair (Males): **36.9**
3. Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports, & Media (Males): **32.0**
4. Transportation & Material Moving (Males/Females): **30.4 / 12.5**
5. Protective Service (Females): **14.0**

Work as a Social Structure + Suicide

The workplace helps give individuals meaning and reasons for living:

- Fosters social relationships
- Offers people a place of purpose
- Sets a social structure
- Place of purpose and solidarity



Mission

Engage employer/professional association leadership to address suicide prevention in a comprehensive way

Provide a roadmap to workplace leaders who wish to engage in this culture-change process



Data Gathering Approaches

Several data collection methods were used, including:

- Focus Groups
- In-Depth Interviews
- Survey



Results – Workplace Readiness

Motivations

- 86%** Increase employee health and well-being
- 72%** Right thing to do
- 56%** Prevent workplace homicide-suicide
- 55%** Increase employee safety and productivity
- 43%** Improve employee engagement and retention
- 30%** Decrease presenteeism and absenteeism



Results – Workplace Readiness

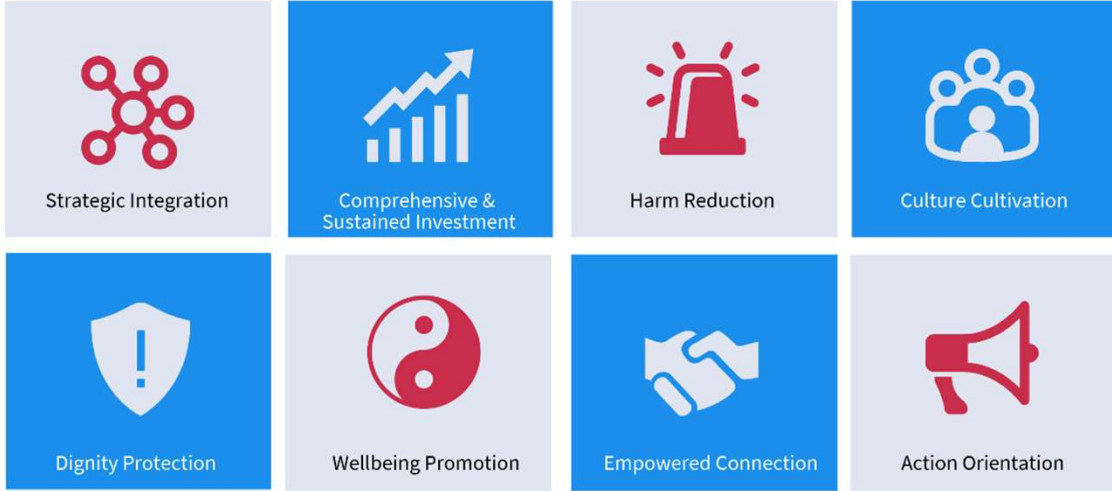
Barriers

- 47%** Getting leaders to buy-in
- 39%** Lack of funding
- 30%** Time
- 19%** Rather focus on mental wellness and resilience
- 18%** Branding concerns – not wanting to be labeled as having a “suicide problem”
- 12%** Unsure of a need for suicide prevention
- 10%** View suicide prevention as a personal/individual matter

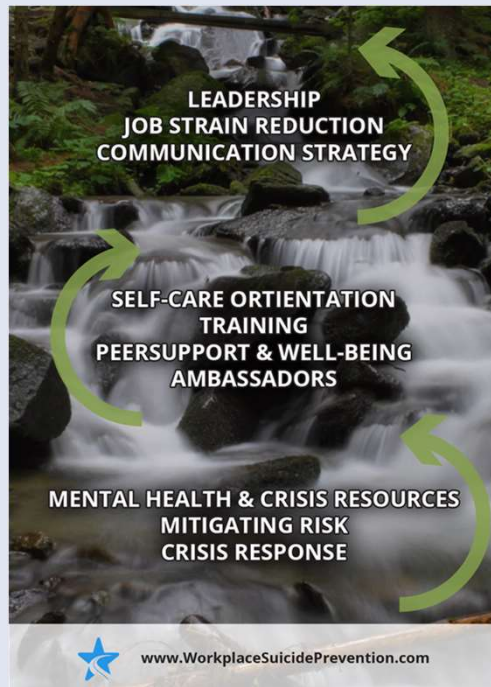


8 Guiding Principles

(www.WorkplaceSuicidePrevention.com)



Stream Parable



9 Practices to Make Suicide Prevention a Health and Safety Priority

- Leadership**
Cultivating a Caring Culture Focused on Community Well-Being
- Job Strain Reduction**
Assess and Address Job Strain and Toxic Work Contributors
- Communication**
Increase Awareness of Understanding Suicide and Reduce Fear of Suicidal People
- Self-Care Orientation**
Self-Screening and Stress/Crisis Inoculation Planning
- Training**
Build a Stratified Suicide Prevention Response Program Specialized Training by Role
- Peer Support & Well-Being Ambassadors**
Informal and Formal Initiatives
- Mental Health & Crisis Resources**
Evaluate and Promote
- Mitigating Risk**
Reduce Access to Lethal Means and Address Legal Issues
- Crisis Response**
Accommodation, Re-integration and Postvention

WORKPLACE SUICIDE PREVENTION

Proposed Solutions

WORKPLACE SUICIDE PREVENTION

Upstream Solutions

Goals:

- ✓ Build Protective Factors
- ✓ Prevent Problems

- Leadership: Culture Cultivation
- Assess and Address Job Strain and Toxic Work Contributors
- Communication



Job Strain + Suicide

- Job insecurity and lack of autonomy
- Lack of variety
- Work-family conflict
- Family-work conflict
- Heightened job dissatisfaction and feeling “trapped”
- Work that is not meaningful or rewarding



Midstream Solutions

Goals:

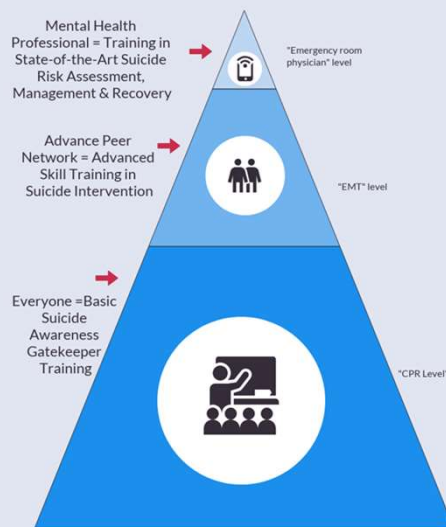
- ✓ Early Identification
- ✓ Link to care

- Self-Care Orientation
- Stratified Training Program
- Peer Support/Well-Being Ambassadors



Stratified Suicide Prevention Training Program for the Workplace

Mapping a tiered workplace suicide prevention training strategy to the more familiar medical crisis tiered training strategy, would metaphorically look like this...



Downstream Solutions

Goals:

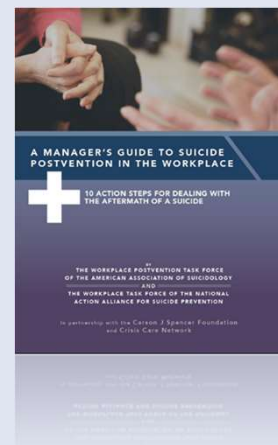
- ✓ Manage crises
- ✓ Restore functioning

- Mental Health & Crisis Resources
- Mitigating Risk
- Crisis Response



Manager's Guide to Workplace Suicide Postvention: Overview

- Gives leadership 10 action steps:
 - Immediate trauma response
 - short-term recovery
 - long-term strategies for helping employees cope down the line
- Succinct checklists, communication templates and flow charts
- Goal is to help to reduce the impact of the suicide event by offering a blueprint for action
 - Minimize exposure effect
 - Honor life lost/space for grieving
 - Help workplace return to functioning



Be part of the solution.

Make suicide prevention a
health and safety priority.

PLEDGE TODAY

www.WorkplaceSuicidePrevention.com



Success to Date & Future Directions

- Since launch October 10, 2019 – 630 Pledge Partners
- Media mentions in Forbes, Washington Post, Harvard Business Review, and more.
- On-Boarding Partners
 1. Pledge
 2. Register
 3. Earn badges to become "Suicide Informed"





Resources

Education & Training

- [Counseling on Access to Lethal Means \(CALM\)](#)
- [Dialectical Behavioral Therapy \(DBT\)](#)
- [Collaborative Assessment & Management of Suicidology \(CAMS\)](#)
- [Suicide Safety Planning](#)
- [Recognizing and Responding to Suicide Risk](#)
- [Assessing and Managing Suicide Risk](#)
- [QPR](#)
- [safeTALK](#)
- [Working Minds](#)

Screening

- [Interactive Screening Program \(ISP\)](#)
- [Columbia-Suicide Severity Rating Scale \(C-SSRS\)](#)

Postvention

- [Manager's Guide to Suicide Postvention in the Workplace](#)



“Be vocal, be visible, be visionary. There is no shame in stepping forward, but there is great risk in holding back and just hoping for the best.”

~Higher Education Center



Stay Connected

#WorkplaceSuicidePrevention
 FB. /WorkplaceSuicidePrevention
 T. /WorkSuicidePrev
 IG: /WorkplaceSuicidePrevention
 YouTube: Workplace Suicide Prevention
www.WorkplaceSuicidePrevention.com

Maggie G. Mortali

E. mmortali@afsp.org
 T. @MaggieAFSP

Jodi Jacobson Frey

E. jfrey@ssw.umaryland.edu
 T. @JodiJFrey
 FB. /jodijacobson.frey

Sally Spencer-Thomas

E. sallyspencerthomas@gmail.com
 T. @sspencerthomas
 FB. /DrSallySpeaks
 L. /sallyspencerthomas

