Making Headlines: Promoting suicide prevention with your local news media
November 8, 2012
Welcome!

- Please mute your line.
- If you have a question, please type it into the “Questions” box or “raise your hand” by clicking the hand logo on your control panel.

We will address questions at the end of the presentation.
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**Know the Signs >> Find the Words >> Reach Out**
Webinar Overview

• Desired Outcome of Media Outreach
• Media Outreach Toolkit Component Overview
  o Info Sheets & Sample Articles
  o Making Headlines: A Guide to Engaging the Media in Suicide Prevention
  o Recommendations for Reporting on Suicide
• Other tips for outreach
• Butte County’s use of the Media Outreach Toolkit
• Your Voice Counts (quick) overview
• Q&A
Desired Outcome

More news media know how and adhere to the recommendations for reporting on suicide
Strategies:

- Distribute reporting recommendations
- News media forums
- Media Outreach Tool Kits and trainings to county spokespeople and PIOs
- Directing Change High School PSA Contest
How you can engage in the Campaign

• Help support news reporting on suicide
  • Adherence to Recommendations
  • Increased coverage of suicide prevention activities

• Work with local media
  – Many counties report that local media is often “silent” on the problem of suicide, promoting stigma

• Utilize tools to engage with the media to promote prevention messaging
Media Outreach Toolkit

- 3 copies sent to all counties (10/21)
- Sent to MH Director, PEI Coordinator, or other MHSA Coordinator
- Encourage you to share with your PIO or others who interact with news media
- Available in Resource Center on YourVoiceCounts.org
Media Outreach Toolkit Components

- Cover letter
- Making Headlines: Guide to Engaging the Media
- Know the Signs Campaign Talking Points
- Know the Signs Campaign Overview
- Preparing Speakers with Personal Stories
- 3 template articles
Campaign Talking Points

- To ensure accuracy with the latest available data
- To ensure consistency at the state and local level
- About the Campaign, supporting facts, suicide stats and facts, the warning signs, Find the Words breakdown, website and crisis line call to action
Preparing Speakers with Personal Stories

• Suggestions for finding potential speakers
• Considerations for choosing a spokesperson
• Tips for preparing a spokesperson
3 Template Articles

• Older Adults: *When “The Golden Years” Don’t Glow*

• Means Restriction: *Take Action – Save a Life*

• Rural Communities: *Lending a Helping Hand to Prevent Suicide*
Making Headlines Guide

- A “how to” guide and resource
- Adapted from Suicide Prevention Resource Center materials
- Tailored for California and the Know the Signs campaign
The importance of your prevention message

• The media can be a powerful tool to promote prevention

• Effective coverage can:
  – Reduce the risk of contagion
  – Educate the public about warning signs and how to help
  – Raise awareness of life saving resources

• Follow the guidelines for safe and effective messaging
Your Suicide Prevention Message should consider how to:

• Emphasize help seeking and providing resources
• Promote awareness that suicide is preventable
• List warning signs as well as protective factors
• Highlight effective treatments for mental health problems
Using the Message Triangle

Define the Problem
Suicide is among the leading causes of death in California, taking more than 3,700 lives a year.

Position Your Organization as a Leader in Suicide Prevention
Your organization is a leader in raising awareness of suicide prevention.

Offer Solutions
Suicide is a preventable public health problem that can be reduced by:
- Raising awareness of the problem
- Eliminating stigma for seeking help
- Establishing mental health parity
- Implementing the California Strategic Plan on Suicide Prevention

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Tips for Developing Effective Messages

• Be clear, concise, and specific
  – “Many suicides are associated with underlying mental health or substance abuse conditions. The good news is that there are effective treatments in our community.”

• Use vivid but appropriate analogies
  – “More Californians die every year by suicide than in motor vehicle crashes, yet more Californians know that wearing a seat belt can decrease their risk of dying in a car crash than know the warning signs and risk factors of suicide.”
Tips for Developing Effective Messages

• Consider what is “newsworthy”
  – Tie your message in to an event or topic already receiving media attention, or to legislation or policy changes under consideration

• Back up your message with evidence
  – Compelling examples such as personal stories can be even more effective than hard data
Consider your Target Audiences

• Effective messages consider:
  – WHO you are trying to reach
  – WHAT they need to know
  – WHY it is important to them

• Develop different sets of talking points that address different audiences

• Have your message and talking points ready
Recommenda2ons for Reporting on Suicide

Current version (2011)
Research based
Consensus based
Approved by Journalists
Nationally distributed
Available in English & Spanish

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Why improve news reporting?

- **Contagion:** The process by which a vulnerable person is influenced towards suicidal behavior through the knowledge of another person’s suicidal act
- **Spreading misinformation**
- **Missing opportunities to share resources**
Recommendations: DO...

✓ ...Emphasize help-seeking
✓ ...Provide information on finding help
✓ ...Emphasize prevention
✓ ...List warning signs
✓ ...Seek advice and quote suicide prevention experts
✓ ...Highlight effective treatments
Recommendations: **DON’T**...

- ...Glorify or romanticize suicide
- ...Normalize suicide by making it sound common
- ...Use sensational language
- ...Oversimplify the causes of suicide
- ...Provide information about the suicide method
Some real headlines...
What are the implications?

“Cyberbullied teen commits suicide”

“Do Rich Neighbors Cause Suicide?”

“The US Army Can’t Stop Soldiers From Killing Themselves”
The Atlantic, Oct. 12, 2012
A Good Example!

The woman had heard on the news about the man in Wilmington who murdered his wife and five children and killed himself after the couple lost their jobs, and now she feared it could happen to her family.

Fortunately, she also had heard on the news about Los Angeles County's mental health hotline.

Her call on Thursday was fielded by mental health coordinator Maricela Velasquez, who spent 50 minutes on the phone listening to a horror story of our times. About the woman losing her job in October, her husband getting laid off last month. And about the domestic violence in their past.

WHERE TO SEEK HELP:
- Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health's 24-hour crisis hotline is 1-800-854-7771.
- The department's Web site is dmv.lacounty.gov
- The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline is 1-800-273-TALK (1-800-273-8255).
- The Web site is suicidepreventionlifeline.org
How is California media doing?

• We analyzed over 200 California-based articles and TV broadcasts on suicide and suicide prevention between July and December 2011

*Media adherence analysis report is available on Your Voice Counts
What we found...

• **Doing well in:**
  - Using non-sensational language

• **Could improve in:**
  - Addressing warning signs & risk factors
  - Avoiding focus on a single event or “cause”
  - Avoiding descriptions of method and details

• **Lots of room for improvement in:**
  - Providing resources
  - Quoting suicide prevention experts
What can you do to **increase** media adherence to the Recommendations and **support** responsible reporting on suicide and suicide prevention?
Step 1: Customize with local resources

More information and resources at:
www.ReportingOnSuicide.org or the following local resources:

Call **1-415-781-0500** anytime to speak to a crisis counselor at San Francisco Suicide Prevention.

 Counties can include their own information, such as a **local crisis hotline or another local resource**

Recommendations already comes with information for the **National Suicide Prevention Lifeline**

A free, 24/7 service that can provide suicidal persons or those around them with support, information and local resources.
Step 2: Distribute broadly

The *Know the Signs* Campaign will distribute copies throughout the state.

You can distribute copies to your local media outlets and encourage its use.
Step 3: Follow up with media outlets

• Are the Recommendations useful for the media?
• Do they require clarification?
• Remember to **praise** when media adhere to the Recommendations!
• Be mindful of **over-criticizing** – fostering partnerships and support systems for the media is **key**.
Conducting Outreach to News Media

• HOW? Pro-active or re-active?
• HOW? Press release or media advisory
• WHO? Are there restrictions in your agency on who can contact the press?
Three important tips

1) **Think like a journalist.** Who will be interested in this story? Why will they read or watch it?

2) **Be available** to help meet deadlines.

3) **Thank them** when they get it right. Or even close.
Applying the Campaign Locally

Butte County’s Suicide Rates In State Context

CALIFORNIA SUICIDE STATISTICS, 2010:

- Suicide deaths: 3,923 (9.4/100,000).
- Non-fatal hospitalizations due to suicidal ideation: 63,929 (13.8/100,000).
- Non-fatal emergency department visits due to suicidal ideation: 287,793 (63.4/100,000).

Butte County Suicide Statistics, 2010:

- Suicide deaths: 51 (12.2/100,000).
- Non-fatal hospitalizations due to suicidal ideation: 1,343 (17.5/100,000).
- Non-fatal emergency department visits due to suicidal ideation: 7,290 (96.4/100,000).

California Suicide Trends Downward:

In 1991, the suicide rate was 11.0/100,000; in 2008, the suicide rate was 8.9/100,000.

Butte County Suicide Trends Upward:

In 1991, the suicide rate was 15.7/100,000; in 2008, the suicide rate was 22.2/100,000.

All data collected from California Department of Public Health, Safe and Active Communities Branch.

The SUICIDE PREVENTION Task Force

CARE ENOUGH TO ACT WORKS TO REFRAME PUBLIC ATTITUDE ON SUICIDE

Betsy Gowman, manager of Program Development for Butte County Behavioral Health, has long recognized the need for a county-wide suicide prevention task force with a particular focus.

If you are in imminent danger to yourself or others, inpatient psychiatric services are available,” Gowman said. “But if you are not in imminent danger, but have thoughts of suicide, there are many resources.

Gowman and her colleagues maintain that suicide needs to be looked at as a continuum—progression of high-risk behaviors leading up to the final act that often seems planned in advance. While emergency services for individuals under extreme mental distress are a vital resource, Gowman believes intervention earlier in the continuum is the best approach.

“You have suicide completions and suicide attempts, but you have a whole range of behavior before that point,” she said.

To offer California established the Office of Suicide Prevention in 2005. Gowman and Anne Kuhl, director of Butte County Behavioral Health, saw an opportunity to take advantage of this statewide campaign and address local needs. However, creating a program that would get through to the community was not easy. Most often, their four-week work was a daunting task.

“This past year, awareness has combined with other streams and it seems challenging to a lot of people, but we have found a way to better understand and follow through with those they want to end their lives,” Gowman said. “Most people in the situation don’t want to and their kids, they want what is best for their kids.”

They formed a team of roughly 15 members from community agencies, including the American Red Cross, the Butte County Public Health Department and Enthusiastic Hope. The group decided to host a suicide summit at Enthusiastic Conferences Center in March of the year to gauge the county’s interest in a full-time suicide prevention task force.

“I thought at first it was all, we would get about 100 people,” Gowman said. “We filled the conference center and had to tell people they couldn’t come in after a certain point. Since then, there’s a big interest and they are doing it for the kids.”

Both in the beginning of the conference, which was split into groups to identify key issues. From those groups, the task force is divided to join a steering committee, which

www.CareEnoughToAct.org

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Pain Isn’t Always Obvious
KNOW THE SIGNS
Suicide Is Preventable

http://www.CareEnoughToAct.org

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“HOW DO YOU HELP THOSE WHO ARE FEELING SO CHALLENGED AND FEELING SO MUCH PAIN THEY WANT TO END THEIR LIFE?”

“People are afraid to talk about it, they’re afraid to ask,” Gowman said. “So, some of our goals are to demolish, education and awareness, to help individuals and different stakeholders around the country and that taking action can make a difference to break the cycle of suicide given hand in hand with the stigma associated with mental health disorders.

“People have deep thoughts that somehow, I’m a failure if I have the mental illnesses,” she said. “People don’t think that if they have cancer or diabetes, even though there are lifestyle changes you can make to prevent them. With mental illness, it is like you’re saying that our person is wrong.”

For Now, Care Enough To Act is a chance to spread the word throughout Butte County. Help is available and there is nothing wrong with seeking it out.

“We help the entire community understand that there are people who can help,” she said. “We can offer some support to a much broader range of people through education, helping them know the warning signs and how to get help without having to go off the deep end.”

CITA Members: Carol Childers, Mike Gonzales, Rich Davis, Betsy Gowman, & Kate McCracken

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DEAR CALIFORNIANS,

Welcome to the Your Voice Counts Forum. The forum is part of a statewide suicide prevention social marketing campaign that is supported by county Mental Health Services Act (MHSA) funds to raise awareness of suicide, its causes, and how to help others and help yourself. Make your voice count! As a member of the Your Voice Counts Forum, you will have an opportunity to provide input on materials that are developed for the campaign, participate in workgroups and share information about suicide prevention activities in your community.
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Welcome to Your Voice Counts!

There are several ways to make your voice count. To begin, review current Input Topics or join a Workgroup that matches your interests or expertise. Announcements are posted for the suicide prevention social marketing campaign, as well as for many other suicide prevention and mental illness stigma reduction efforts around the state. Before you leave the forum today, please invite a friend.

Campaign Announcements

- **September 17, 2012**
  - Campaign Website Launched
  - [http://www.suicidespreventable.org](http://www.suicidespreventable.org)

- **August 29, 2012**
  - Directing Change High School Student Video Contest Launched
  - [http://www.directingchange.org](http://www.directingchange.org)

Other Announcements

- **September 20, 2012**
  - Free Registration! RSVP: Peer Support Services Conference-Sept 26, 2012 - Statewide/peers/professionals
  - [Flier](#)
  - [Agenda](#)

- **September 6, 2012**
  - NAMI Calls for Increased Investment in the Mental Health of Active Duty Military and Veterans

Input Topics

- **Open Until September 18, 2012**
  - Review and vote on outreach poster and brochure
  - The outreach poster and 8-panel brochure can augment suicide prevention outreach in your community. Once finalized, the materials can be used as is or customized (e.g., with your county's crisis phone number). Please review each of the two draft posters and two draft brochure versions (pdfs) below and vote on your preferred option for each. In addition, please provide comments using the private feedback button. Final versions of the poster and brochure in English and Spanish will be available later this month, and additional languages later in the Fall.

Active Workgroups

- **Open Until October 08, 2012**
  - Outreach to Men
  - Desired Members: Men, especially ages 35 to 55, and those who are in a position to reach out to men.
  - The purpose of this workgroup is to discuss materials and strategies to reach men and/or those close to them.

Who is on the YVC Forum?

- [Bryce Moanally](#)
- [Karen](#)
Know the Signs

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Reach Out
Questions & Discussion

If you have a question, please type it into the “Questions” box or “raise your hand” by clicking the hand logo on your control panel.
Thank you!

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Please fill out the Evaluation!

Webinar will be archived on
www.yourvoicecounts.org

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