

Recommendations for Suicide Prevention in Nebraska

Symposium participants selected four items for inclusion in the Recommendations for Suicide Prevention in Nebraska. They are:

- I. Explore collaboration between the Nebraska Department of Education, the Nebraska Health and Human Services System and the State Suicide Workgroup to develop a statewide program of suicide assessment and prevention to integrate in school curricula.
 - a. Implement the Columbia University TeenScreen Program in schools. Rated “promising” by the Suicide Prevention Resource Center, the program’s purpose is to “identify youth who are at-risk for suicide and potentially suffering from mental illness and then ensure they receive a complete evaluation.” The program has three stages: (1) Completion of a self-administered screening instrument. (2) Interviews with a clinician for students who screen “positive.” (3) Connection with a case manager for students found to need additional services. The program is flexible for schools that have different levels of resources and administrative structures, as the people who work with students who screen positive can be existing staff or external teams.
 - b. Partner with Nebraska Health and Human Services System to develop a plan to provide behavioral health professionals when schools need them to implement the TeenScreen program.
 - c. Include suicide education as a part of the teacher certification process.
 - d. Deemphasize handing out information to teenagers, and instead work to develop caring relationships with them.
2. Gather all suicide data available from state, county and local agencies, hospitals, and other organizations in order to obtain a better understanding of suicide in Nebraska, publish it and prevention resources in print and on a state suicide education Web site, and target the resources especially to rural areas, health care providers, and schools.
 - a. Consider advertising on the popular Web site MySpace.com or other Web sites popular with young people to draw attention to the suicide education Web site. The Web site must be multi-lingual.
 - b. Provide resources appropriate to a variety of groups, including health care providers, parents, and teachers.
 - c. Consult rural stakeholders to determine what resources they need.
 - d. Work to gather data from correctional facilities on inmate suicide attempts and completions.
 - e. Because only some hospitals report discharge data, information on suicide attempts and completions from hospitals is incomplete. Work to get more hospitals to report these data.
3. Explore the implementation of the Emergency Department Means Restriction Education program, with inclusion of all emergency responders, not just emergency room staff.
 - a. Include suicide training in, for example, emergency medical technician (EMT) training.
 - b. Develop a best-practice standard procedure for emergency personnel statewide to use in situations involving attempted suicide, to cover especially what measures are taken to assist people who survive suicide attempts.
 - c. Provide continuing education units (CEUs) to encourage medical personnel to take suicide training courses.
 - d. Provide critical incident stress management training for first responders who respond at the scene of a completed suicide.
 - e. Provide the Emergency Department Means Restriction Education program training to others in the community, for example religious leaders and counselors,

- so they can educate parents about means restriction as well.
 - f. Provide the training to law enforcement personnel at jails.
4. Implement a yearlong, statewide public awareness campaign that includes a focus on firearm safety in light of the new law allowing concealed weapons in Nebraska and employs communications tools developed by Project Relate.
- a. Focus on properly securing firearms, given that Nebraska's law allowing people to carry concealed weapons will go into effect in January 2007.
 - b. Focus especially on reaching residents of Nebraska's rural areas.
 - c. Avoid "reinventing the wheel" by taking advantage of Project Relate's already-developed public service announcements.
 - d. Also employ Project Relate's teen improvisational theater group for outreach.
 - e. Depending on the availability of funds, consider all media outlets – newspapers, radio, television, and Web advertisements.
 - f. As one option for funding, ask broadcast stations to adopt suicide prevention as their public-service program for the year and give free air time.
 - g. Ensure that information about suicide prevention is delivered in culturally and linguistically appropriate ways.
 - h. Find celebrities touched by suicide and recruit them to speak at news conferences across the state.