



Juneau Community Suicide Prevention Task Force NEWSLETTER

July 21, 2008
Volume 1, Issue 1

FAST FACT:

The Juneau Police Dept. noted a 30% increase in Suicide related calls in Juneau, in 2007,

Future Meetings:

OVERSIGHT

Thursday, 7/31, 4:00 p.m.
T&H Vocational Training
Resource Center
(Off Hospital Drive)

HIGH-RISK

Thursday, 8/14, 8:15 a.m.
Tlingit/Haida, Downtown

MENTAL HEALTH

Thursday, 8/21, 4:00 p.m.
Juneau Police Dept.

PUBLIC AWARENESS

Monday, 8/11, 3:00 p.m.
Downtown Library.

CHILDREN/ADOL.

Will reconvene when school
opens for 2008-09 year.

WEB PAGE DESIGN

Tuesday, 7/22, 10:00 a.m.
Mendenhall Mall Library

TRAINING

Will meet as needed.

Greetings

Thank you for your continued time, energy and support in developing the most comprehensive and cohesive "Suicide Prevention Plan" possible for the Juneau Community. Your contributions are critical, as we continue to share our collective perspective, insight and expertise; and "put into action" our ideas and strategies regarding this tragic, complex and preventable mental health issue.

A new monthly "**Task Force Newsletter**", will go out to all members the middle of each month in order to keep members abreast of all the different strategies the other committees are working on. It will also help facilitate the critical consultation and collaboration, which should occur among the five Committees in order to enhance our effectiveness. The newsletter will also provide updates on new Task Force Members, provide dates/times for upcoming meetings, and provide any other relevant information pertinent to the Task Force.

Oversight Committee Update

At the June 26th meeting, a good deal of discussion occurred regarding the High School SOS mental health screening and curriculum. Questions and concerns were raised regarding; the public's awareness and acceptance of such an undertaking, the potential problems with implementing such a broad based screening and concerns regarding community wide mental health readiness. Spirited discussion then turned to Juneau's mental health

shortages and our limited resources.

Strategic ideas regarding possible political avenues to consider in order to advocate and bring a collective, coherent voice to our elected State and City officials, as well as State agencies regarding Juneau's shortage of mental health resources and options were also raised. Discussion also occurred regarding the structure of the Task Force, and the need and importance of the five committees to collaborate with each other.

GRANT AWARD!!

The Juneau School District is pleased to announce it was awarded the "Suicide Prevention Grant" from DHSS on July 1st. The three year grant will enable the Juneau School District to initiate a system-wide program referred to as the "Signs of Suicide" to all 9th and 11th graders this year, then eventually include Middle School students the following year. Due to its effectiveness and success, thousands of schools across the country are now utilizing the SOS program, which is the only empirically researched based school-wide suicide prevention and intervention program to demonstrate statistically significant declines in self-reported suicidal attempts (AM J Public Health, 2004; 94:446-451). Stay tuned for further developments and discussion!!

PUBLIC AWARENESS COMMITTEE

NEW TASK FORCE MEMBERS

Lucy Gifford
Veterans Affairs
(High-Risk)

Ati Nasiah
AWARE Shelter
(High-Risk)

Kristen Mahle
United Way
(Public Awareness)

The Public Awareness Committee had a well-attended meeting on July 10th. Numerous public awareness strategies are in the design and developmental stages as noted below;

~**“Prevention Posters”** targeting adolescents. A graphic design competition by adolescents. Assistance from JDHS art teachers may be possible. (facilitated by DebbieWhite)

~ **“Informational Pamphlets”** targeting the adult population of Juneau with information regarding the signs of suicide, what to respond, and how to access mental health services (facilitated by Susan Wylie).

~ **“WebPage Design”** a webpage for the Juneau Community on how to access mental health services, signs of suicide, prevention and resources. There will be many links for specific populations, as well as a Task Force link. There will also be links to National Suicide Prevention sites. Task Force members are encouraged to participate as the next section notes.

~ Public Awareness Members, **Gail and Sam Trivette** have set up a memorial fund for “Suicide Prevention”, through the Juneau Community Foundation. Gail and Sam would like to donate funds to the Public Awareness Committee to help support the suicide prevention public awareness services in Juneau.

CHILDREN/ADOLESCENTS

Although the **Children/Adolescent Committee** will not formally meet again until the beginning of the 2008-09 school-year, there are many activities in progress regarding mental health and suicide prevention/intervention in the schools. These include but are not limited to the following;

- Implement suicide prevention curriculum and mental health screening for all 9th and 11th graders through the **“Signs Of Suicide”** (SOS) Program, starting this winter of the 2008-09 school year
- Investigate the possibility of implementing the “Signs Of Suicide” curriculum and screening to Middle School students the 2009-10 school year.
- **Training for School Counselors, Administrators and Teachers** on response preparedness, suicide prevention, intervention and postvention specifically designed to meet the JSD’s needs utilizing the PREPaRE, and Gatekeepers models/resources.
- Continued examination and development of **counseling/health curriculum** regarding suicide prevention at all grade levels.
- Continued collaboration between JSD, JYS and other mental health agencies and/or resources to enhance the mental health services our children/adolescents receive. This includes **ongoing assessment of mental health services in the schools and community** including but not limited to; accessibility, cultural considerations, resources, interagency cooperation/communication and mental health aftercare plans for those in crisis.

The SOS High School Program is the only school-based suicide prevention program to be selected by SAMHSA for its National Registry of Evidence-Based Programs and Practices (NREPP)

TRAINING UPDATES;

Destiny Sargeant and Ann Turner-Olsen, Co-chairs of the Training Committee invite the other four committees or any individual Task Force member, to contact them if they have any training; needs, thoughts, ideas or questions pertaining to suicide prevention and intervention.

- James Gallanos, Alaska State Suicide Prevention Coordinator, provided **Gatekeeper Suicide Prevention Training** in Juneau, June 23-25, to approximately 10 mental health clinicians who flew in from around the State. Task Force members Coleen Felkl and Brendan Kiernan participated in the June training. Six Task Force members have now received training; Ann Turner-Olsen, Susan Wylie, Ric Iannolino, Les Hamley, Coleen Felkl and Brendan Kiernan.
- Task Force member Ronalda Cadiente-Brown, through the Juneau School District's, "Safe Schools" Grant, offered an excellent training opportunity June 9-11, sponsored by the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP). The **PREPaRE** training provides schools and other mental health organizations, best practice crisis preparedness and emergency response intervention efforts for school systems. Task Force members; Bob Swanson, Ronalda Cadiente-Brown, Colleen Felkl, David Newton, Barb Conant and Brendan Kiernan were among the approximately 20-25 individuals who participated in the training.
- Juneau Youth Services recently sent two Clinicians up to Anchorage for suicide prevention and assessment training. **Responding to Suicide Risk: Essential Skills for Clinicians** is sponsored by American Association of Suicidology The June 9-10 training, is sponsored by American Association of Suicidology
- Lucy Gifford, with Veterans Affairs, and a member of the High-Risk Committee, recently received "Suicide Prevention Training," from the Anchorage office of Veterans Affairs, and felt many of our community agencies could benefit from the training. She will enquire about the possibility of bringing the trainer to Juneau.

**Gatekeeper;
Suicide Prevention
Training**

PREPaRE:
Crisis preparedness and
emergency response

**Responding to
Suicide Risk:**
Essential Skills
for Clinicians

“The Urge to End It All”, NEW YORK TIMES

Marc Wheeler came across a fascinating article on the act of suicide, “The Urge to End It All”, by Scott Anderson, published in the July 6, 2008, New York Times Magazine. Time and again throughout the article, Anderson presents the case that suicide is a rather “impulsive act” of desperation, rather than a premeditated thought through plan. If a community reduces the means by which a person can commit suicide, suicide is reduced in that community by a significant degree. Find this short article at “NY Times.com”, and type in the title, “The Urge to End It All”. An interesting read!



Military Veterans

S.E. Alaska Veterans returning from the War in Iraq, often feel misunderstood and alone, and geographically isolated from other returning troops.

Many soldiers in Iraq experience PTSD after their first tour, yet are often required to serve a 2nd and 3rd tour.

Alaska has more Vietnam Veterans per capita, than any other State in the Nation.

According to the Pentagon, 115 Army Soldiers committed Suicide in 2007, which was the highest rate on record.

“It is the breakdown of relationships due to long periods of deployment and PTSD, which is at the core of the soldiers pain”.

U.S. Army Chaplin
Lt. Col. Dolinger

HIGH-RISK COMMITTEE UPDATE

The **High-Risk Committee** has designated two specific populations to target who often feel confused, extremely isolated, and hopeless; **18-25 year old high-risk young adults** and the **Elderly**. Both populations are often “**disconnected**” from the mainstream. The 18-25 year old high-risk adults, often feel lost and overwhelmed, as they are no longer eligible for the web of educational, mental health, legal and social services support afforded children and adolescents. The elderly may experience significant declines in health, with loss of work, self-esteem, purpose, friends, family, and perhaps spouse. Both populations often experience despair. Potential substance abuse problems put them at an even greater risk for suicidal behavior. This Committee will investigate strategies to support them during these difficult life transitions and adjustments.

Additional issues the Committee discussed include;

- Identification of 7 high-risk populations with the disconnected young adults and elderly as the highest risk
- **New services for S.E. Veterans;** Two Physicians, Psychiatrist or Psychologist, Nurse to start soon in Federal Building. First Time!
- Discussed the need to develop “Protective Factors” for high-risk populations, and to stop the cycle of young high-risk children becoming tragedies as adults.
- Discussed Gatekeeper and Veterans Suicide Prevention Training.
- Discussed the need to coordinate goals with the other four Committees.

MENTAL-HEALTH COMMITTEE UPDATE;

The Mental-Health committee has developed the following **mission statement** for their committee with an emphasis on the following three points;

“Improve access to mental health services and promote coordination of services to address suicide prevention/intervention”

1. Assess community resources available to those at risk of suicidal or potentially suicidal persons and assist them in getting help.
2. Provide simple user-friendly information and procedures to obtain help.
3. Formalize coordination mechanisms and structures to ensure sustainability.

At their 7/17 meeting the members utilized their mission statement as a beacon for strategic development. Discussion centered on the frustration the consumer is faced with obtaining mental health services in Juneau. Funding for the many non-profit mental health organizations often keeps these services somewhat isolated, or disjointed from each other. At a minimum this can leave the consumer confused and overwhelmed as to what services are available and how to access these services. The committee will invite representatives from DHSS to attend their next meeting to discuss this dilemma, and will strongly suggest a Statewide “single point of entry” mental health resource mechanism, to assist all Alaska consumers and communities with this confusing, often overwhelming process.

The committee will also develop a “Decision Tree” resource guide, “What to do” if you or someone you know is experiencing suicidal ideation. They will work with the Public Awareness Committee to provide this guide to the public, via the “web site” or the “Mental Health Resource” pamphlets being developed.