



## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR: YOUTH SUICIDE PREVENTION TRAINING FOR EARLY IDENTIFICATION AND REFERRAL (GATEKEEPER TRAINING)

Whenever possible, community-based suicide prevention efforts should begin with a strategic planning effort that includes an assessment of the suicide problem in the community and the resources available to address the problem. Due to the nature of suicidal behaviors, the strategic planning process should result in a multi-faceted approach that will address the population of interest on multiple levels. When the strategic planning process indicates that training to support early identification and referral of potentially suicidal youth is needed as one facet of the overall approach, the following recommendations should be considered, recognizing that gatekeeper training that includes skill rehearsal through role playing or other exercises is more likely to be effective than training that does not incorporate this approach.

- Referral tracking protocols-- including information sharing agreements and privacy protection-- should be in place prior to gatekeeper training in order to help track youths identified at risk through service receipt.
- Training curricula should be tailored to the specific needs of the audience to be trained, taking into account the suicide prevention roles they will fulfill after the training. The desired knowledge, behavioral, and attitudinal outcomes for each training participant should align with the needs of their setting, role, and responsibilities.
- Training content, materials, and examples should reflect the predominant community cultural norms and values and be sensitive to minority populations being served.
- Training should be implemented after the lines of referral and follow-up are clearly established and where available resources—including appropriately trained service providers-- have been identified and aligned to address the needs of youths identified at risk for suicide.
- Individuals who demonstrate a capacity for maintaining effective, interpersonal interactions with youths and who serve in a role that easily facilitates gatekeeper responsibilities should be given priority in receiving training.
- Protocols and policies taught during training should include information about specific suicide prevention resources and support available in the communities in which the trainees live or work.
- Individuals who can serve as trainers to other gatekeepers (i.e. train-the-trainer) should be considered as a means to promote sustainability of community-level training. Candidates to become trainers should have the required instructional skills as well as the motivation and capacity to effectively train others.



These recommendations were developed under SAMHSA leadership with input from experts in the field of youth suicide prevention and Garrett Lee Smith program partners for grantees and others interested in implementing community-based youth suicide prevention training. Recommendations are intended to specifically address gatekeeper training that is designed to equip members of the community to identify youth with an increased potential for suicide and refer them to appropriate sources of help



## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

### **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR: YOUTH SUICIDE PREVENTION TRAINING FOR EARLY IDENTIFICATION AND REFERRAL (GATEKEEPER TRAINING)**

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The Lessons Learned Working Group (LLWG) includes participants from multiple agencies and key stakeholders in suicide prevention including Garrett Lee Smith Youth Suicide Prevention and Early Intervention grantees, experts in the field of suicide prevention and training program developers. Led by Dr. Richard McKeon, acting Chief of the Suicide Prevention Branch at the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), the LLWG also includes participants from the Suicide Prevention Resource Center (SPRC), Centers for Disease Control (CDC), ICF Macro, and Gallup Consulting.

The purpose of the LLWG is to gather information about what we know, what we are learning and the implications for implementing effective suicide prevention programs; identify areas for additional research and evaluation; and communicate and engage with the field about youth suicide prevention.

In 2009, after an analysis of possible study areas, the group decided to analyze how grantees identify, plan, and implement gatekeeper training activities. To do this, the group reviewed available research literature, examined GLS training data and invited grantees to share their lessons learned. From this collaborative effort, the group created recommendations for gatekeeper training. In addition, the LLWG invited training developers and experts in the field to provide their perspectives on the guidelines which were modified as a result of the feedback.

The LLWG believes these recommendations, based on research and evaluation and informed by lessons learned from grantees, are likely to make gatekeeper training a more effective approach to youth suicide prevention.

Persons involved in the development of these guidelines include:

- Richard McKeon, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration
- David Litts, Suicide Prevention Resource Center
- Phil Rogers, American Foundation for Suicide Prevention
- Christine Walrath, ICF Macro
- Chad Rodi, ICF Macro
- Paul Quinnett, QPR Institute
- Ken Norton, Connect Suicide Prevention Project
- Richard Ramsay, LivingWorks
- Colleen Carpenter, Purdue University (Indiana) GLS grantee
- Shelly Rutz, University of Wisconsin GLS grantee
- Jason Yarmer and Tamara Perkins, Native American Rehabilitation Association GLS grantee
- Cory Wallack, Syracuse University GLS grantee
- Marilyn Downs and Bonnie Lipton, Tufts University GLS grantee
- James Schut, Tennessee GLS grantee
- Lisa Shumaker, and Markey Adams, Arizona GLS grantee
- Sara Dinklage and Leigh Reposa, Rhode Island GLS grantee
- Barri Faucet, West Virginia GLS grantee

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*Please send comments/suggestions to*

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