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Slide 1



CREATING COMPETENT COMMUNITIES FOR YOUTH SUICIDE PREVENTION

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CREATING COMPETENT COMMUNITIES FOR YOUTH SUICIDE PREVENTION



In memory of John Kalafat, Ph.D.

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Slide 3



Instructional Objectives

- Review benefits of comprehensive school-based program- “the competent school community”
- Outline specific program components
- Provide ‘best practice’ example of faculty-staff intervention
- Review model for parent awareness training & student curriculum

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Instructional Objectives



Primary Sources

- “Making Educators Partners in Youth Suicide Prevention”-www.sptsnj.org
- *Lifelines: A School-Based Approach to Youth Suicide Prevention*- Prevention Program- Istrapon@hazleden.org
- Maine Youth Suicide Prevention Program- www.maine.gov/suicide/

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Primary Sources



Context for Prevention: A “Competent School Community”

- Over-arching goal of the school is the prevention of self-destructive behavior
- All members are concerned about each other’s welfare
- Everyone knows where to get help for themselves and each other and are consistently inclined to do so

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Context for Prevention: A “Competent School Community”



Assumptions About Competent Community

Administration

- Are concerned about welfare & safety of school community
- Recognize that proactive approach can forestall problems
- Support 'zero tolerance' for violence which includes self-violence

Faculty

- Are committed to provision of knowledge and enhancing life- skills
- Are receptive to self- learning that facilitates teaching and supports classroom learning environment

Students

- Are developmentally reliant upon peers
- Respond to practical, action-oriented behavior alternatives
- Will use adult support if they perceive it as helpful

Parents

- Are generally unaware of dimensions of youth suicide
- Require & appreciate accurate information to facilitate effective decision-making about their children

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Assumptions About Competent Community



Role of the School in Suicide Prevention

- Critical
- Limited
- Falls under the mandate to provide students with safe environment where the primary focus is on learning

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Role of the School in Suicide Prevention



Role of Mental Health in School Suicide Prevention

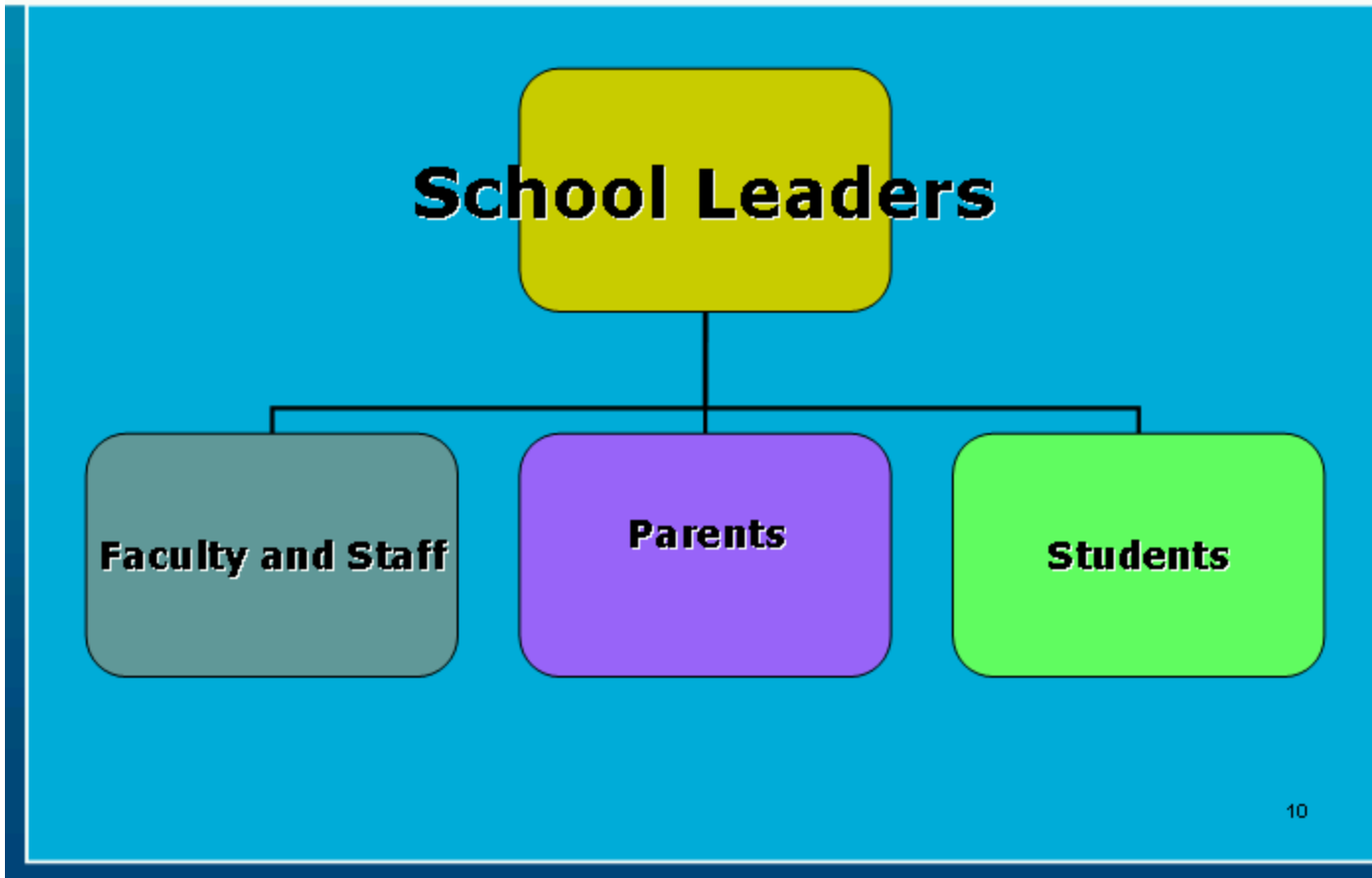
- Provide programs, technical assistance & consultation that reflect & respect the realities of school function & resources
- Avoid mental health jargon

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Role of Mental Health in School Suicide Prevention



A Competent School Community:



A Competent School Community:



Role of School Leaders

- To be committed to suicide prevention and engaged in activities that support this goal
- To be active in the development and dissemination of policies and procedures that deal with at-risk youth
- To ensure that school staff are:
 - ◆ knowledgeable about the warning signs for suicide and
 - ◆ informed about guidelines for reporting concerns about students

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Role of School Leaders



Role of School Leaders

- To connect the school with suicide prevention resources in the larger community
- To offer consistent support to all school staff in suicide prevention activities

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Role of School Leaders



The School Leader's First Step

POLICIES & PROCEDURES

- Provide the guidelines for crisis response of support, control & structure
- Demonstrate administrative commitment and support
- Outline a prepared and planned response



The School Leader's First Step



School Readiness Survey

- Provides specific questions that address prevention, intervention & postvention for all components of competent community to assist in the development of comprehensive policies and procedures

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School Readiness Survey



Administrative Readiness Survey

- 1. Does your school have an up-to-date crisis response plan?:
- 2. Does the crisis response plan have solid administrative support?
- 3. Does the crisis plan have written protocols on how to manage suicidal (student and/or staff) behavior? Attempt on campus? Attempt off campus?
- 4. Have crisis team members been identified? Are individuals from both the school and the community involved on the crisis team?
- 5. Are crisis team members provided with training?

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Administrative Readiness Survey



Administrative Readiness Survey

- 6. Are substitute crisis team members identified in case regular members are not available due to absence, conference attendance, vacation, etc.?
- 7. Would the crisis team be able to support multiple schools in the event of a murder/suicide situation?
- 8. Do crisis team members have copies of school floor plans for their use and/or to provide to local law enforcement, if needed?
- 9. Does the crisis team meet and practice on a regular basis?
- 10. Are copies of the school crisis plan readily accessible to all school personnel?
- 11. Is there an established method for disseminating protocols that includes who should receive them? Is there a plan for providing new staff with protocols?

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Administrative Readiness Survey



Administrative Readiness Survey

- 12. Has school administration provided clear direction about legal rights and obligations of administrators, faculty, and staff in assisting with a suicidal student?
- 13. Is someone designated to track the number of suicides, suicide attempts, and/or referrals for suicidal behavior?
- 14. Has a policy for maintaining confidentiality of sensitive student information been created and disseminated to all school personnel?

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Administrative Readiness Survey



Administrative Readiness Survey

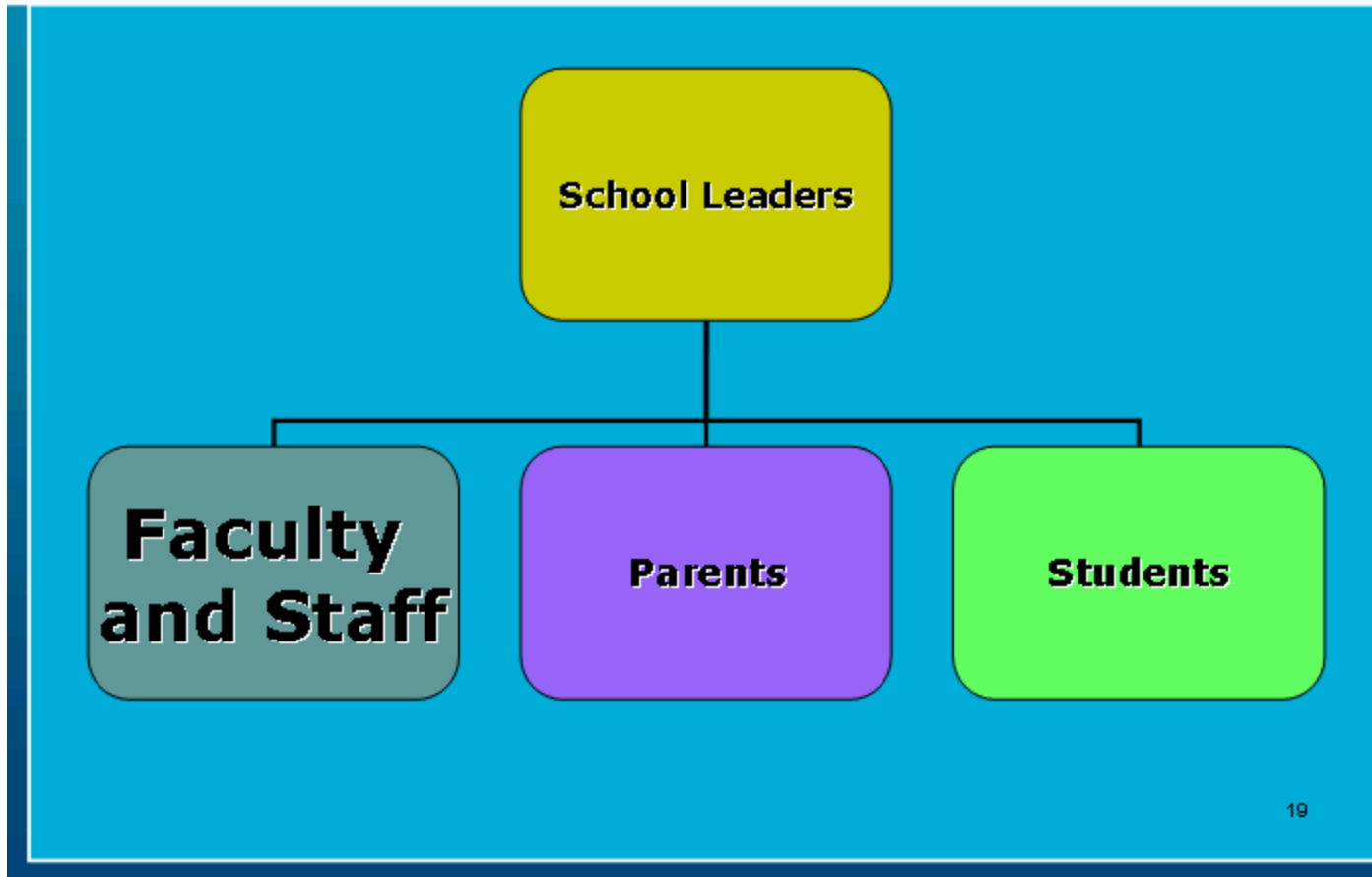
- 15. Does the school have a formal Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with the local crisis service provider(s) outlining the services to be provided to the school system such as risk assessments, crisis management, and/or debriefing school staff in the aftermath of a crisis? Does the agreement include debriefing parents and community members in the event of a suicide?
- 16. Does the MOA include guidelines for how the school receives feedback on the outcome of the referrals that are made?

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Administrative Readiness Survey



A Competent School Community:



A Competent School Community:



Why Educator Training is Important:

According to the Carnegie Task Force on Education:

School systems are not responsible for meeting every need of their students, but when the need directly affects learning, the school must meet the challenge.

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Role of Faculty and Staff

- To learn information that facilitates identification of at-risk students
- To listen to students, verbally and nonverbally for warning signs
- To identify those students who may be at elevated risk based on this identification
- To refer those students to designated school resources
- To be familiar with school policies & procedures

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Role of Faculty and Staff




Goals of Staff Suicide Awareness Training

- Suicide awareness training provides teachers with a procedure which they can utilize when they are presented with suicidal statements or concerns.
- It also reinforces their natural strengths as good listeners and caring/competent professionals.

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Goals of Staff Suicide Awareness Training




To access training link, go to www.sptsnj.org

MAKING EDUCATORS PARTNERS IN SUICIDE PREVENTION

A Best-Practice School-Based Youth Suicide Prevention Initiative

John Kalafat, PhD

Maureen M. Underwood, LCSW



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MAKING EDUCATORS PARTNERS IN SUICIDE PREVENTION



Selecting Educational Objectives

1. Anticipated resistance...

- ◆ “A school is not a mental health clinic...”
- ◆ “Suicide is a rare event- it hasn’t happened in my school...”
- ◆ “We already have too many other responsibilities- we don’t have the time...”

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Selecting Educational Objectives



Selecting Educational Objectives

... And addressed resistance specifically

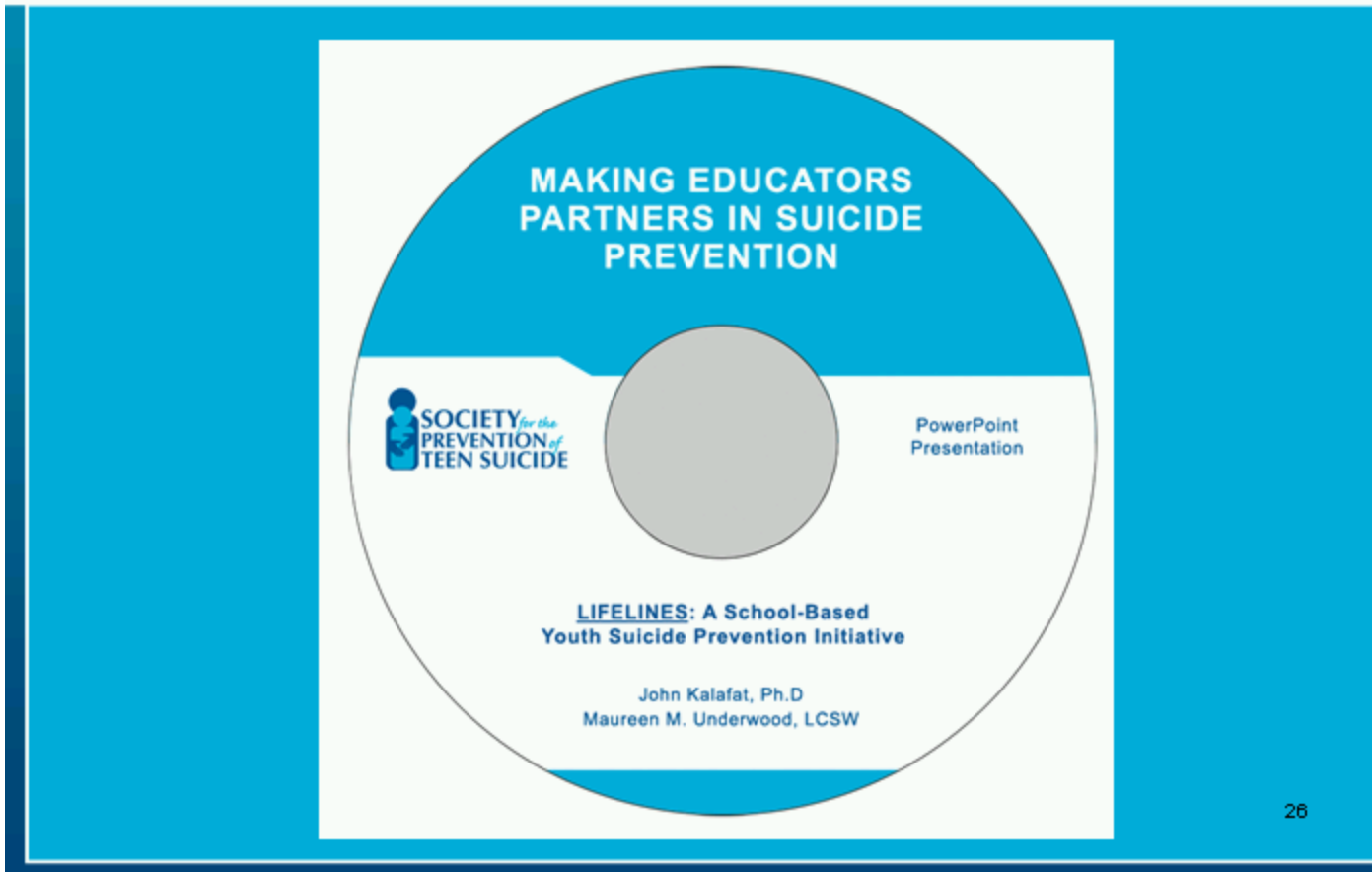
- ◆ Program does not focus on diagnosing mental illness
- ◆ Uses survivor accounts to demonstrate reality of suicide & its impact
- ◆ Clarifies how program is relevant to generic teaching skills
- ◆ Designed as both “live” workshop and online program that can be taken at own pace

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Selecting Educational Objectives



For more information, go to www.sptsnj.org



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Selecting Educational Objectives

2. Recognized impact of personal values and attitudes on capacity to learn
3. Understood how misinformed people may be about suicide
4. Clarified limited faculty/staff role
5. Provided examples of interactions with students
6. Encouraged additional learning

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Selecting Educational Objectives



Course Participants

- **Online (to date)- 7193**
 - ◆ 81 % Teachers
 - ◆ 10 % Administrators & counseling staff
 - ◆ 9 % Support staff
- **Years of Experience**
 - ◆ 0-5 =47%
 - ◆ 6-10 =14%
 - ◆ Over 10 = 39%
- **No exposure to student suicide- 77%**
- **“Live” Workshop Format- 3752**


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Course Participants



Faculty/Staff Training

Illustration of Program Content



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Faculty/Staff Training



Your Role Simplified:

- **Learning**
signs of risk in students
- **Identifying**
at-risk students
- **Referring**
to appropriate resources



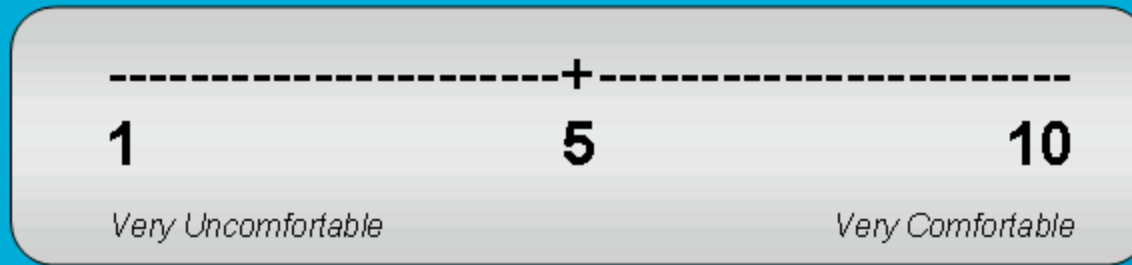
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Your Role Simplified:



Talking About Suicide

On a 1 to 10 scale, rank how comfortable you are talking about suicide.



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Talking About Suicide



Risk Factors / Warning Signs

Red - Warning Signs

Yellow - Risk Factors

Green - Protective Factors

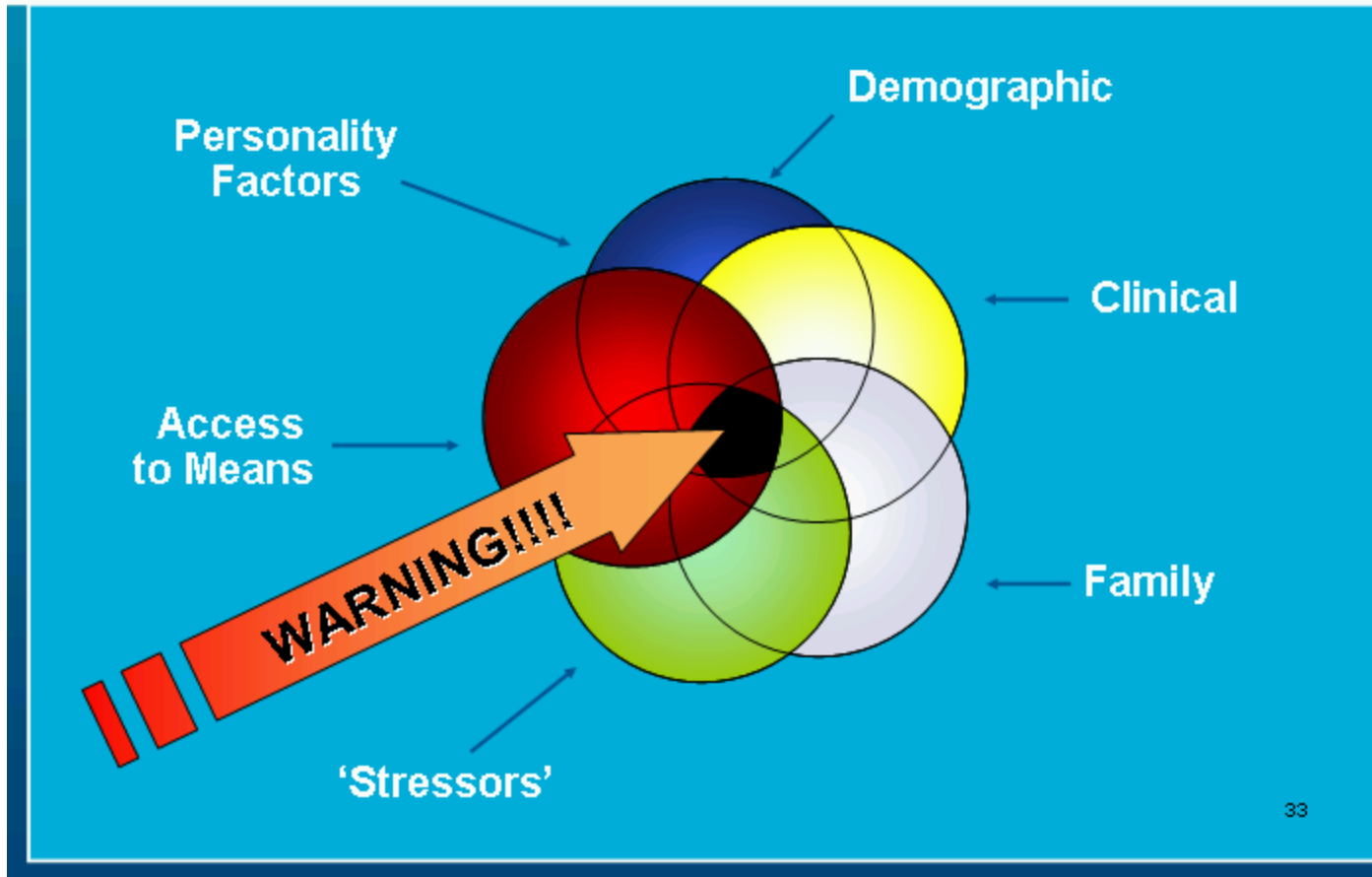


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Risk Factors / Warning Signs



Risk Factors for Youth Suicide



Risk Factors for Youth Suicide



Warning Signs



***F**eelings*
***A**ctions*
***C**hanges*
***T**hreats*
***S**ituations*

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Warning Signs



Protective Factors

- Contact with a caring adult
- Sense of connection or participation in school
- Positive self-esteem and coping skills
- Access to and care for mental / physical / substance disorders



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Protective Factors



Fostering Protective Factors

- Teach students it is okay to ask for help
- Give students permission to talk about traumatic events like suicide
- Help students identify trusted adults
- Encourage participation in school & community activities
- Acknowledge student efforts
- Be a good listener, as often as you can



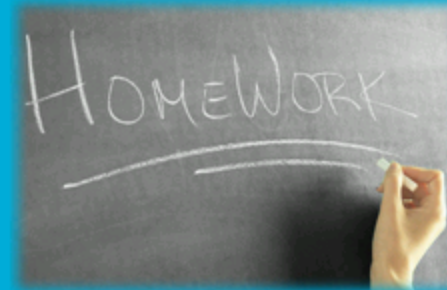
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Fostering Protective Factors



So Here's Your Homework:

1. Review school policy & procedures
2. Examine personal attitudes and values
3. Consider data
4. Review curriculum for reminders and for ways in which you can foster protective factors (resiliency)
5. Remember your role:
 - *Identify*
 - *Listen*
 - *Refer*

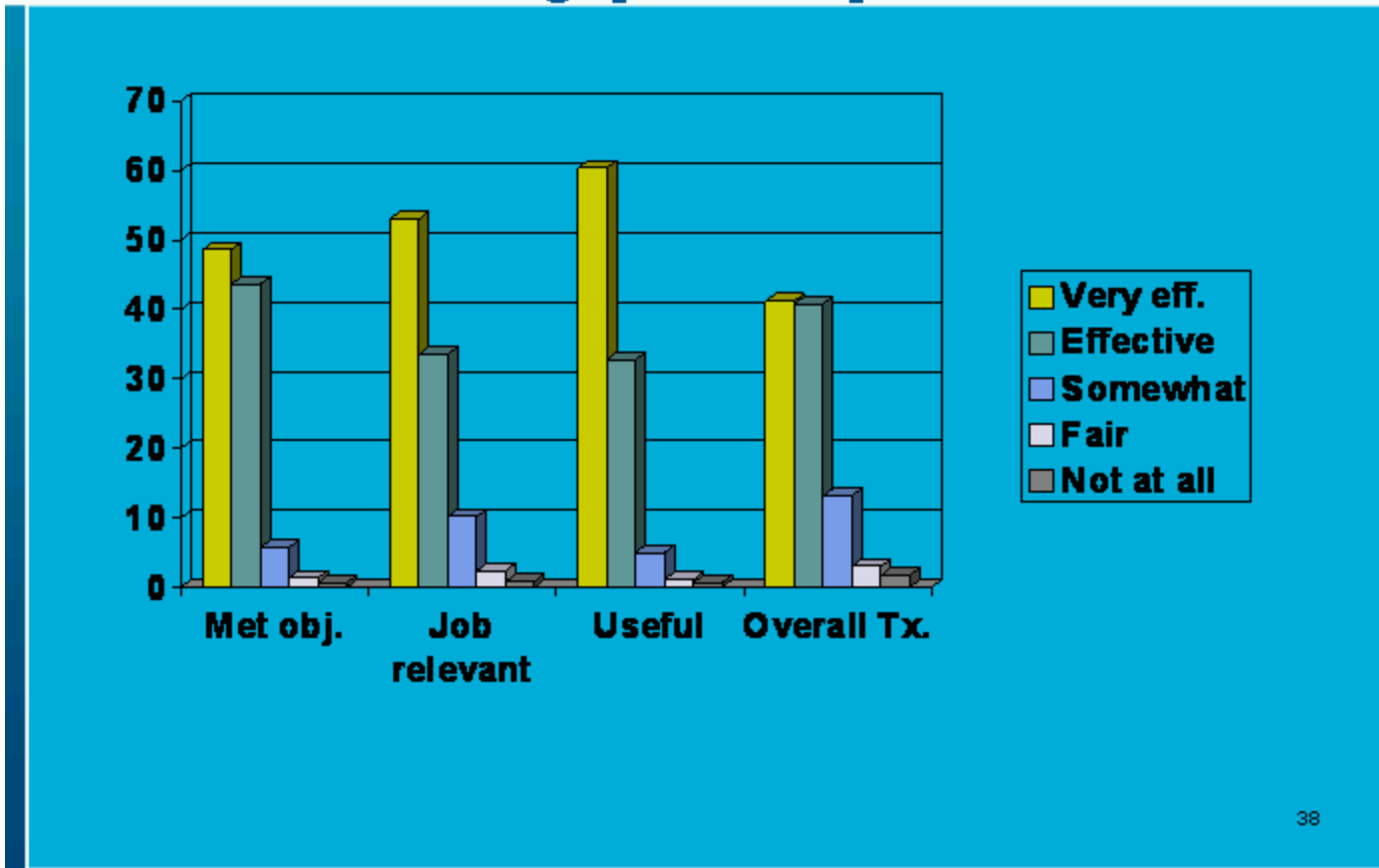


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So Here's Your Homework:



Online Evaluation of Teacher Training [N= 5959]



Online Evaluation of Teacher Training [N= 5959]



Faculty Training Knowledge Gains

Information about school's role in suicide prevention

- The reason for suicide awareness training for educators is to help them identify students who might need mental health assistance.

TRUE- **19.1% increase in correct answer**

- The primary characteristic of a competent school community is the availability of on-site mental health resources to deal with suicidal crisis -

FALSE- **16.7% increase in correct answer**

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Faculty Training Knowledge Gains



Faculty Training Knowledge Gains

Information about school's role in suicide prevention

- Thoughts or feelings about suicide are indicative of a serious mental health problem and should therefore only be addressed by a mental health professional.

FALSE- **20.1% increase in correct answer**

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Faculty Training Knowledge Gains



Faculty Training Knowledge Gains

- Information about suicide
 - ◆ There is never just one reason for a suicide- every suicide is multidetermined
TRUE- 8.5% increase in correct answer
 - ◆ Most students do not tell parents about a suicide attempt
TRUE- 13.9% increase

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Faculty Training Knowledge Gains



Would You Recommend this Training to Others?

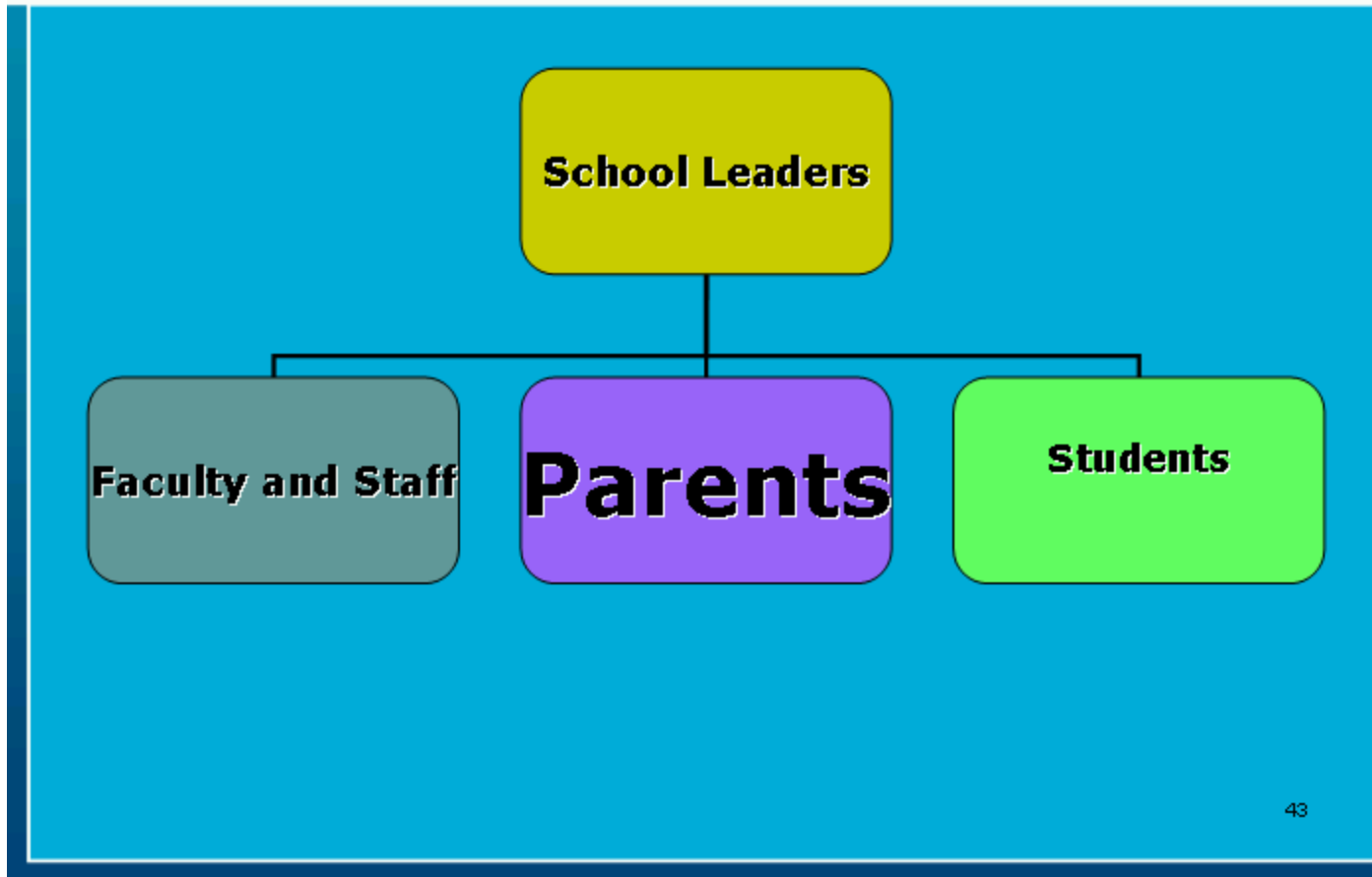
- With no reservations- - 77.78%
- With some reservations- 19.97%
- Not at all – 2.25%

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Would You Recommend this Training to Others?



A Competent School Community:



A Competent School Community:



Role of Parents

- Understand school's policies and procedures
- Recognize signs of trouble in their children
- Know what to do and where to go for resources
- Understand how to respond to other at-risk youth

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Role of Parents



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Parent Program- *“Not My Kid...”*

Program Objectives:

- ◆ Address resistance- “Not my kid...”
- ◆ Enhance capacity of parents to address realities of youth suicide risk by modeling strategies for asking mental health professionals questions about suicide risk
- ◆ Empower parents to ask questions!

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Parent Program- “Not My Kid...”



Parent Program- *“Not My Kid...”*

Program Content

- ◆ Hosted by Lanny Berman, Executive Director, American Association of Suicidology & Maureen Underwood
- ◆ 8 culturally-diverse parents posing questions
- ◆ Addresses: how to talk about suicide, risk factors, responding to text messages, exposure concerns, medication questions, transition to college

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Parent Program- *“Not My Kid...”*



Parent Program- *“Not My Kid...”*

Program Dissemination

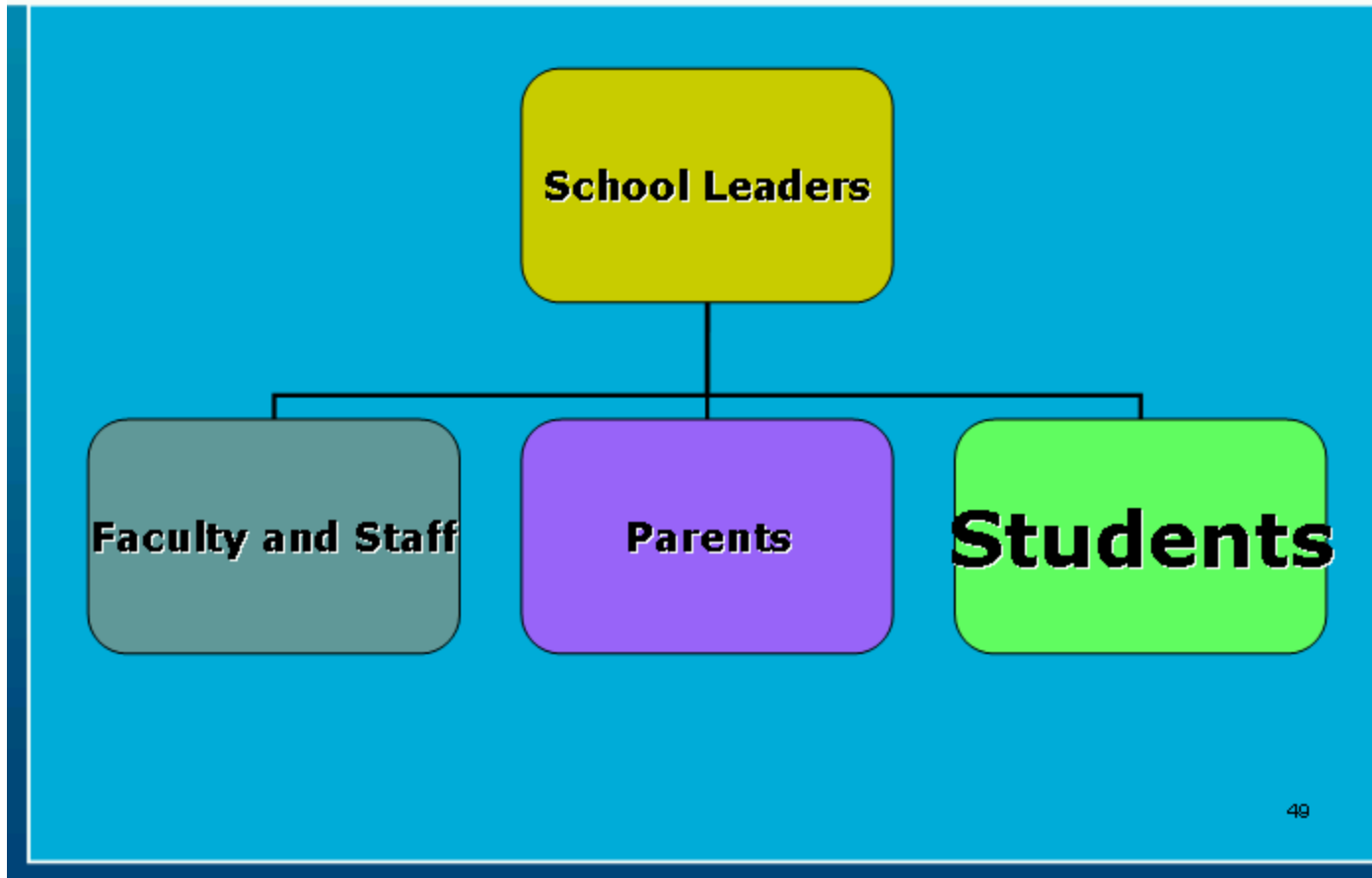
- ◆ On-line at [www. sptsnj.org](http://www.sptsnj.org)
- ◆ Hard copies- printed with instruction
“After you have viewed this, please give to another parent...”

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Parent Program- “Not My Kid...”



A Competent School Community:



A Competent School Community:



Role of Students

- Know relevant facts about suicide, including warning signs
- Recognize the threat of suicidal thoughts & behavior and take troubled peers seriously
- Demonstrate positive attitudes about intervention & help-seeking
- Know how to respond to troubled peers
- Know resources: be able to name one trusted adult and know how resources will respond

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Role of Students



SOCIETY for the
PREVENTION of
TEEN SUICIDE

For more information contact Istrapon@hazleden.org

Lifelines
A Suicide Prevention Program

Maureen Underwood, L.C.S.W., John Kalafat, Ph.D.,
and the Maine Youth Suicide Prevention Program, led by the Maine CDC

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***LIFELINES* Components**

- Models competent school community with specific, detailed components
 - ◆ Administrative consultation
 - ◆ Faculty/staff presentation
 - ◆ Parent workshop
 - ◆ Student curriculum

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LIFELINES Components



***LIFELINES* Student Curriculum**

- 4 session unit usually taught in 8th or 9th grade health classes
- Includes detailed lesson plans correlated to National curriculum standards and audiovisual aids that cover facts about suicide and the students' role in suicide prevention
- Reviews in school and community resources
- Designed to be taught by a school faculty member

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LIFELINES Student Curriculum



***LIFELINES* Student Curriculum**

- ◆ Established educational principles employed in lessons
 - Problem v. content focused
 - Contemporaneous issues
 - Uses participatory learning
 - Only 3 objectives per 45 minute lesson

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LIFELINES Student Curriculum



***LIFELINES* Student Curriculum Learning Objectives**

Session 1- When is a Friend in Trouble?

- Define reasons for a unit on suicide
- Examine personal reactions to a situation involving a peer's suicidal behavior
- Examine the ways in which our feelings about suicide influence our actions
- Identify basic facts about suicide

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LIFELINES Student Curriculum Learning Objectives



LIFELINES Student Curriculum Learning Objectives

Session 2: How do I Help a Friend?

- **Organize warning signs around FACTS sheets**
- **Name three basic suicide intervention steps**
- **Identify the words to use to ask about suicide**

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LIFELINES Student Curriculum Learning Objectives



SOCIETY for the
PREVENTION of
TEEN SUICIDE

LIFELINES Student Curriculum Learning Objectives

Session 3: Where Can I Go to Get Help?

- Recognize specific warning signs of suicide
- Identify the steps in a successful peer intervention
- Define traits of helpful people
- Identify school procedures for responding to suicidal students

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LIFELINES Student Curriculum Learning Objectives



SOCIETY for the
PREVENTION of
TEEN SUICIDE

LIFELINES Student Curriculum Learning Objectives

Session 4- How Can I Use What I've Learned?

- Demonstrate ability to help a troubled friend through scripted role-plays
- Demonstrate willingness to help self or a troubled friend by signing a "Help-Seeking Pledge"
- Identify the "wallet card" as a resource

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LIFELINES Student Curriculum Learning Objectives



LIFELINES Evaluation

- Pre-post with comparison group
 - ◆ Kalafat & Elias (1994)
 - ◆ Kalafat & Gagliano (1996)
 - ◆ Haines & Kalafat (2006)
- Pre-post with comparison group, implementation evaluation, follow-up referrals
 - ◆ Hailey, Kalafat, O'Halloran & Lubell (2006)

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LIFELINES Evaluation




***LIFELINES* Student Curriculum**

Evaluation Results

- ◆ Increased knowledge about suicide and school resources
- ◆ Increased inclination to tell an adult about an at-risk peer
- ◆ Increased confidence in school's response capability
- ◆ Increased referrals

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LIFELINES Student Curriculum



SOCIETY *for the*
PREVENTION *of*
TEEN SUICIDE

At the end of the day....

... where do you go from here?



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At the end of the day....



Your Homework...

- Remember you don't have all the answers
- Evaluate existing resources for 'best fit'
- If you don't find what you want, keep looking!
- Stay current
- Be practical
- Remember: Youth suicide prevention is everyone's business!

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Your Homework...



It's in the Shelter of Each Other...



It's in the Shelter of Each Other...



Web Resources

- www.sptsnj.org
Society for the Prevention of Teen Suicide
*Resources for the competent school community.
PDF files for parents, educators, students,
links to educator training, parent awareness video*
- www.Maine.gov/suicide/
Comprehensive and practical resources easy to download
- <http://theguide.fmhi.usf.edu/>
University of Southern Florida
*Downloadable guide for a school suicide prevention
program*

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Web Resources