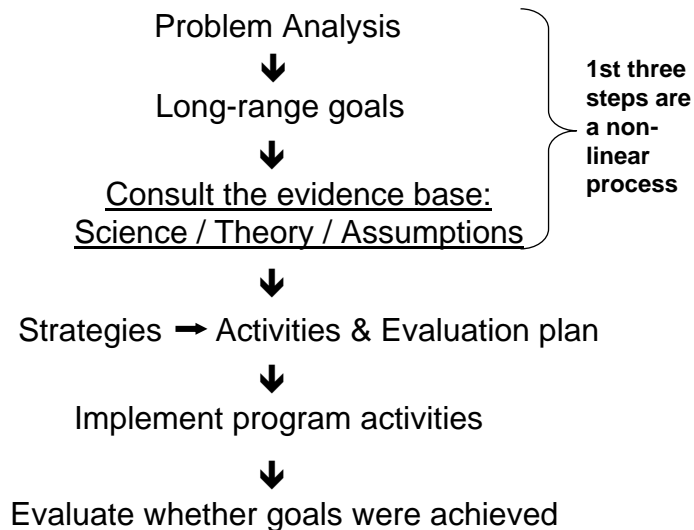


# Best Practices for Campus Suicide Prevention

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David Litts, O.D.

## Strategic Planning/ Evaluation



# Overview

- Best Practices: The Lexicon
- Best Practices: The List
- Best Practices: The Linkage

# The Lexicon

- Categories
  - Evidence based practices
  - Expert consensus statements and guidelines
  - Best practices

# **1. Evidence-Based Practices**

- Practices shown empirically to reduce suicide risk for individuals or population groups
  - Reduce risk factors,
  - Increase protective factors,
  - Reduce suicidal behaviors (ideation, attempts, completions)

# **1. Evidence-Based Practices**

- Listed on SPRC Evidence-Based Practices, or
- National Registry for Effective Programs and Practices (NREPP)

## 2. Expert Consensus Statements & Guidelines

- Evaluated on:
  1. Importance
  2. Practicality
  3. Accuracy
  4. Safety
  5. Representative of present knowledge
  6. Methodology

## 3. Best Practices

- Programs, guidelines, protocols, and practices that address specific objectives of the National Strategy for Suicide Prevention
  - Comply with:
    - **American Association of Suicidology program guidelines (AAS & Kalafat, 1999) and**
    - **Safe and Effective Messaging for Suicide Prevention (SPRC/Gould), and**
  - Are feasible

## 3. Best Practices

- AAS Program Guidelines
  - Program goals and objectives are conceptually and empirically grounded
  - Program materials are clearly articulated and packaged

## 3. Best Practices

- AAS Program Guidelines
  - The program
    - **Employs appropriate instructional principles**
    - **Is comprehensive; addresses all organizational levels**
    - **Addresses the multiple contexts in which participants interact**
    - **Conforms to the context, culture, and values of the target population**

## **3. Best Practices**

- **Safe and Effective Messaging for Suicide Prevention**

Program messages should:

1. Contain information about prevention
2. Provide information about help-seeking (including how to find help)
3. List suicide warning signs and risk and protective factors
4. Discuss effective treatments of underlying mental health problems

## **3. Best Practices**

- **Safe and Effective Messaging**

Program messages should not

5. Glorify or romanticize suicide or people who have died by suicide
6. Normalize suicide by presenting it as a common event
7. Present detailed descriptions of a suicide victim or methods of suicide
8. Present personal details of people who have died by suicide
9. Present suicide as an inexplicable act or explain it as a result of stress only

# The List

## 1. Evidence-Based Practices

- **Air Force (Knox, Litts, Talcott, Feig, & Caine, 2003)**
- **Analgesic Packaging (Hawton, 2002)**
- **Brief At-Home Psychological Counseling (Guthrie et al., 2001)**
- **C-CARE & CAST (Randell, Eggert, & Pike, 2001)**
- **Columbia University TeenScreen (Kaplan et al., 2005)**
- **Emergency Room Education (Kruesi et al., 1999; McManus et al., 1997)**
- **Emergency Room Intervention (Rotheram-Borus, Piacentini, Cantwell, Belin, & Song, 2000)**

# 1. Evidence-Based Practices

- Lifelines (Kalafat & Elias, 1994)
- PROSPECT (Bruce et al., 2004)
- Reconnecting Youth (Thompson, Eggert, Randell, & Pike, 2001)
- SOS (Aseltine, 2003; Aseltine & DeMartino, 2004)
- Zuni Life Skills (LaFromboise & Howard-Pitney, 1995)

## 2. Expert Consensus Statements & Guidelines

Under Consideration:

- Framework for Developing Institutional Protocols (The Jed Foundation)
- Safe and Effective Messaging for Suicide Prevention (Gould/SPRC)
- Warning Signs for Suicide (AAS)
- Reporting on Suicide: Recommendations for the Media (Annenberg/AFSP)
- American Psychiatric Association Practice Guidelines

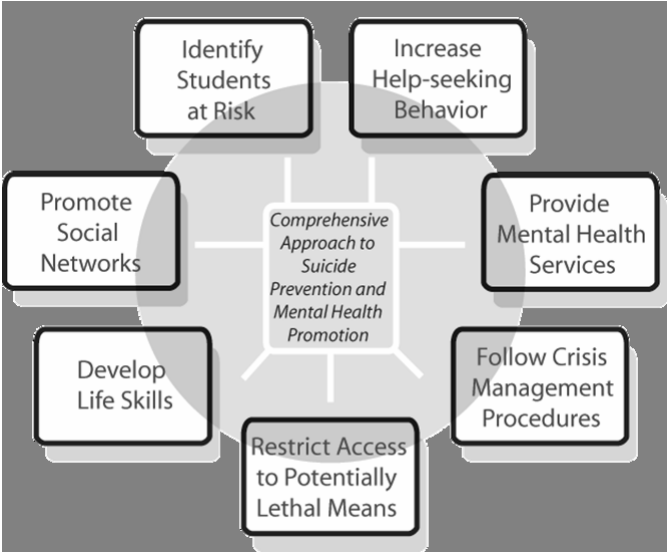


# The Linkage

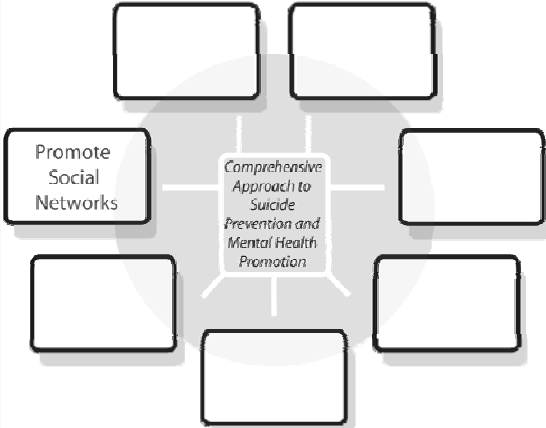
*Putting it into practice*

# Comprehensive Prevention Approach

# Jed Foundation/EDC Comprehensive Approach

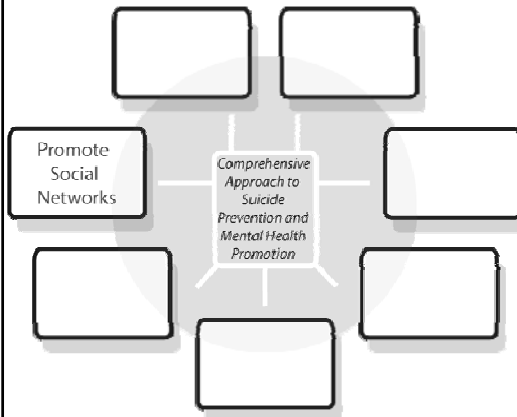


# Promote Social Networks



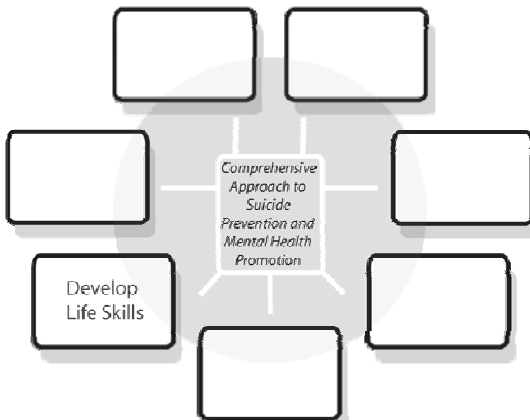
**Goal:** To promote relationship-building between students and a sense of community on campus

## Promote Social Networks



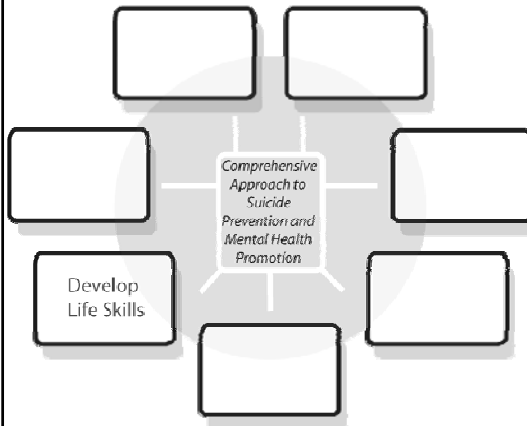
- Reduce student isolation and promote feeling of belonging
- Encourage the development of smaller groups within the larger campus community

## Develop Life Skills



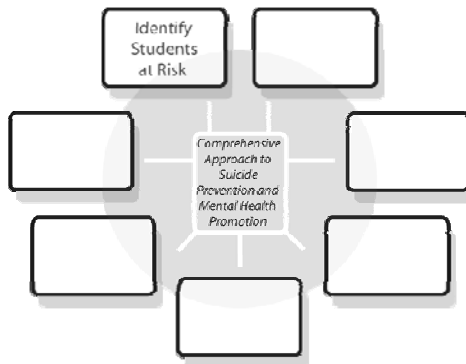
**Goal:** To promote the development of skills that will assist students as they face various challenges in both school and in life

# Develop Life Skills



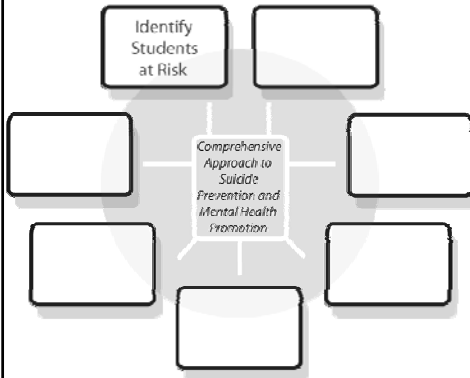
- Improve students' management of the rigors of college life
- Equip students with tools to recognize and manage triggers and stressors

# Identify Students At Risk



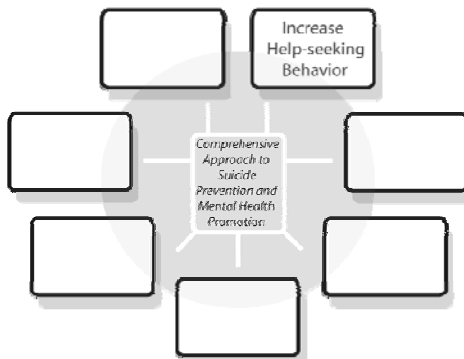
**Goal:** To identify those students who may be at risk for suicide through the use of outreach efforts, screening, and other means

# Identify Students At Risk



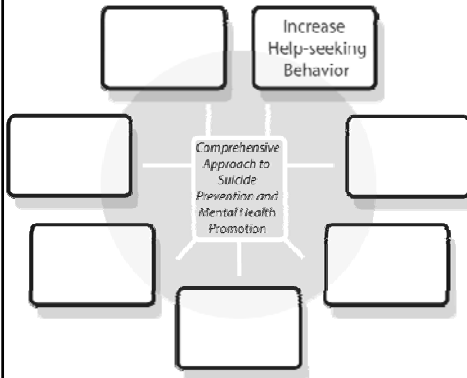
- Include questions about mental health on medical history form
- Provide gatekeeper training to recognize/refer distressed or distressing students
- Create interface between disciplinary process and mental health service
- Screen to identify high-risk or potentially high-risk students
- Establish cross-department case management committee

# Increase Help-Seeking Behaviors



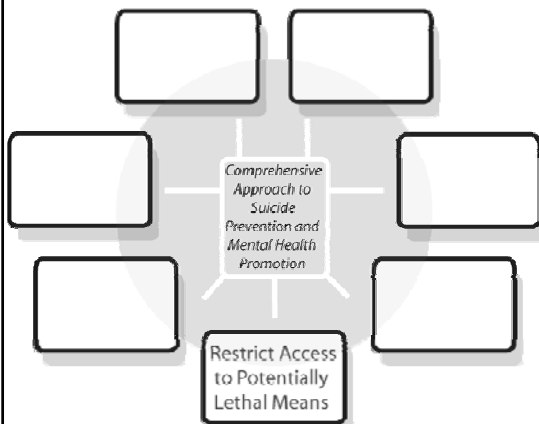
**Goal:** To educate students about mental health and wellness, encourage seeking appropriate treatment for emotional issues, and reduce the stigma surrounding mental illness and seeking help for suicidal thoughts and behaviors

# Increase Help-Seeking Behaviors



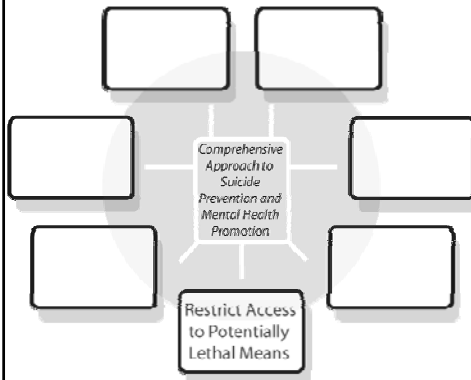
- Stimulate campus-wide cultural change that destigmatizes mental health problems and removes barriers to getting help
- Enhance accessibility of mental health services
- Educate students about the signs and symptoms of suicide and mental illness and where to go to get help
- Provide online self-assessment tools

# Restrict Access to Lethal Means



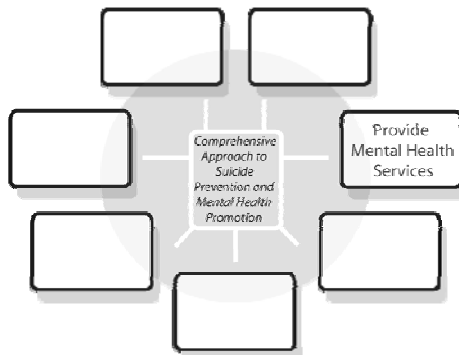
**Goal:** To limit access to potential sites, weapons, and other agents that may facilitate dying by suicide

# Restrict Access to Lethal Means



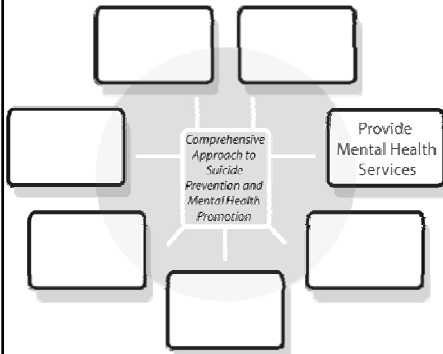
- Limit access and/or erect fences on roofs of buildings
- Replace windows or restrict size of window openings
- Restrict access to chemicals
- Prohibit guns on campus
- Control access to alcohol and other drugs

# Provide Mental Health Services



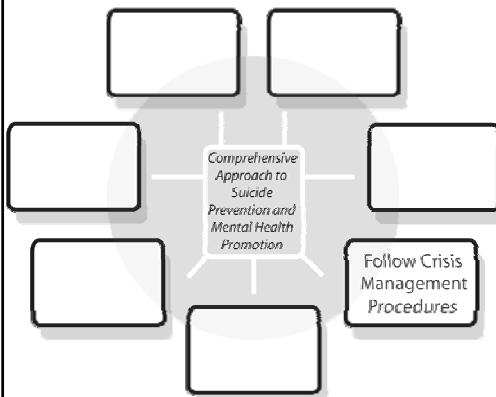
**Goal:** To accurately diagnose and appropriately treat students with emotional problems, including assessing and managing suicide risk

# Provide Mental Health Services



- Utilize internal university resources to complement existing services
- Engage in prevention/outreach
- Create linkages to community resources
- Train mental health providers to identify/treat suicidal risk
- Refer cases as appropriate
- Institute policies and procedures
- Train personnel on confidentiality, notification, and other legal issues

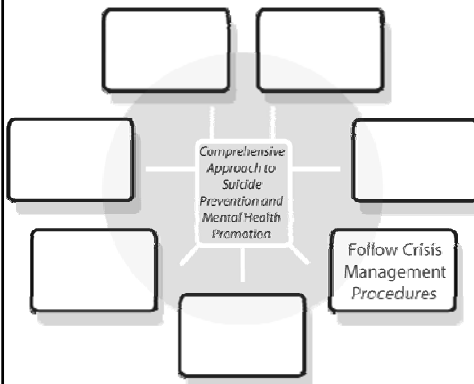
# Crisis Management Procedures



**Goal:** To develop policies that promote the safety of distressed or suicidal students and respond to crises, including suicidal acts, using institutionalized processes.



# Crisis Management Procedures

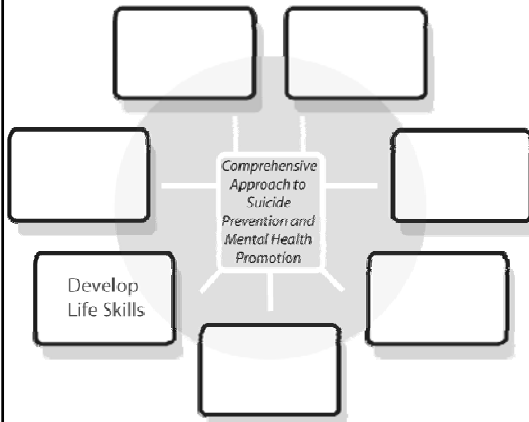


- Establish and follow policies (e.g., parental notification, medical leave/re-entry) and protocols that respond to suicide attempts and other high-risk behavior
- Respond with a comprehensive postvention program

## Grantee Activities

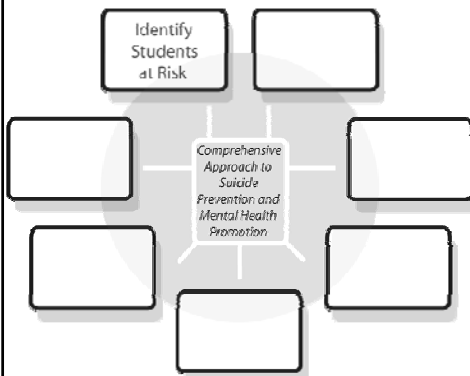
- Training programs
- Networking infrastructure
- Educational seminars
- Hotline
- Informational materials
- Educational materials for families

# Develop Life Skills: Grant Activities



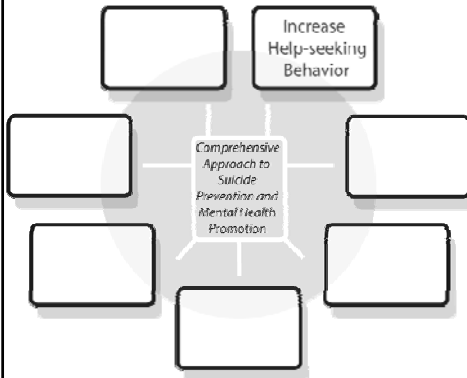
- Informational materials
- Educational materials for families

# Identify Students At Risk: Grant Activities



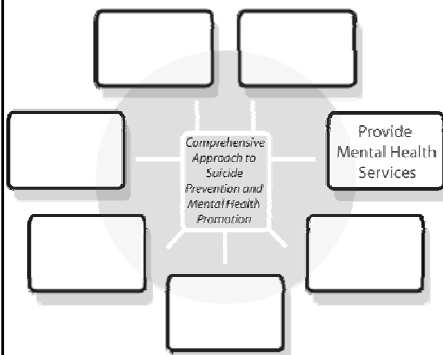
- Training programs
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## Increase Help-Seeking Behaviors: Grant Activities



- Training programs
- Networking infrastructure
- Educational seminars
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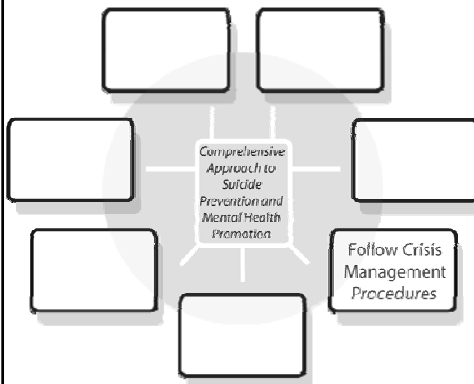
## Provide Mental Health Services: Grant Activities



- Training programs
- Networking infrastructure
- Informational materials

# Crisis Management Procedures: Grant

## Activities



- Training programs
- Networking infrastructure
- Hotline
- Educational materials for families

## Essential Components of Effective Prevention

- *Leadership*: president, campus task force
- *Collaboration* across campus departments
  - Faculty and student involvement
- *Data collection*
- *Strategic planning*
- *Evaluation*
- *Sustainment*

## To consider in break-out sessions:

- What are your planned grant activities designed to change?
  - *Consider all levels of the social ecological model.*
- How do the programs, services, and policies you are learning about produce change?
  - What specific factors are the target of change?
- How will you know the desired change has occurred?

## To consider in break-out sessions:

- With what other departments of offices on campus are you linking to comprehensively address suicide risk?
- What “bubbles” are you advancing through that collaboration?