

Crisis Lines and the Suicide Prevention Strategic Plan

Illinois Suicide Prevention Coalition
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Crisis lines and phone talk lines have traditionally been perceived as suicide prevention. And indeed, calls mostly consist of individuals who are in such a crisis or who are chronically feeling hopeless and helpless. Since over 32,000 Americans take their life every year compared to 18,000 who die by homicide and 17,000 by impaired driving, the need for expanded view of suicide prevention is sorely needed.

In fact, many times using crisis lines as the only means of suicide prevention is like ‘treating heart disease only when a person experiences a heart attack.’ The state of the art of heart disease treatment has totally changed course in the last 50 years----not so in suicide prevention. Crisis lines and phone talk lines are the best way to build a network of other interventions around suicide prevention and advance a new ‘suicide prevention state of the art.’

The Illinois Suicide Prevention Coalition has formulated a Strategic Plan based on 10 recommendations:

- **“Ask About Suicide” Encourage healthcare providers, law enforcement personnel, clergy, mental health professionals and school personnel to screen for suicidal ideation and intention.**
- **“Know Your Neighbor” Develop of networks of relatives, friends, neighbors and members to decrease isolation of those at-risk for suicide.**
- **“Treatment Works” Create a continuum of care for those at highest risk.**
- **“Ensure Safety to Live and Love” Provide support and suicide prevention outreach to victims of harassment and violence.**
- **“Knowledge is Power” Establish suicide prevention education curriculum requirements for public service professionals.**
- **“Everyone Deserves Care” Increase access to mental health care, especially in rural areas, in long-term care facilities, and for those who lack transportation, or for those who are uninsured and underinsured.**
- **“Data Counts: Improve data collection of suicide deaths and suicide attempts.**
- **“Suicide is Everyone’s Business” Increase the general public’s awareness of restricting access to means of suicide.**
- **“Break the Stigma” Develop and implement public service campaigns to reduce the stigma of suicide and increase public awareness of mental health care.**
- **“Bank on Saving Lives” Develop funding sources for suicide prevention, intervention and postvention programs in Illinois and evaluate their effectiveness.**

Each of these recommendations has collaborative opportunities for action steps with which existing crisis lines can partner. Detailed ideas for these collaborations will be addressed with specific, practical ways to implement them. Participants will leave with many new ideas that can be used immediately to enhance their crisis line, advance the Suicide Prevention Strategic Plan, and develop collaborative networking to increase their services.

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