Lifeline USA Standards, Guidelines and Best Practices

Lee Judy

Director: Standards, Training and Practice Division
National Suicide Prevention Lifeline
50 Broadway, New York, New York 10004
618-281-3986
ljudy@mhaofnyc.org

The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline is a network of 135 independent crisis centers across the United States that sorts calls by area code for callers to 800-237-TALK. Lifeline averages 50,000 calls a month. Although each of these centers is accredited by an outside body, Lifeline has developed standards, policies, guidelines and best practices for its centers. The first standard was for Suicide Risk Assessment. All 135 centers are now using a risk assessment that meets these standards.

Since the suicide risk assessment standard and its background paper were published in Suicide and Life Threatening Behavior in June, 2007, not much time will be spent on these standards. However, for non Lifeline centers in attendance the details of these standards will be presented including the organization of the risk assessment into the 4 core categories of Suicidal Desire, Suicidal Capability, Suicidal Intent and Buffers. The subcomponents making up these categories will also be presented.

The Policies and Guidelines for Helping Lifeline Callers at Imminent Risk of Suicide have just been published and Lifeline centers are developing their approaches to them. The major components will be presented with a particular focus on Lifeline's commitment of helping callers help themselves. It also includes a belief that the crisis center should take responsibility for the continuity of care.

Along that same line Lifeline organized a work group to look at the best practice models for crisis centers to use when following callers who are at risk for suicide but not at imminent risk. This work group has published Guidances for Follow-up. Those findings will be presented with emphasis on continuity of care, the use of a safety plan and risk assessment at all phases of the follow-up process.

Copies of the referenced Lifeline Standards, Policies, Guidelines and recommended practices can be obtained by emailing the presenter. Time will be allowed for questions.