3. Community Planning

Purpose:
Prepare to implement initiatives and programs believed to have potential for reducing the suicide rate.

Activities:
- Conduct community mobilization including initial research and an environmental scan.
- Explore suggested suicide prevention actions suggested by the Florida Suicide Prevention Coordinating Council and other community coalitions.
- Explore best and evidence-based practices to learn about what is available.
- Explore this site's Tool Shed to learn what other community coalitions have found useful.
- Hold initial meetings with champion and stakeholders to develop a logic model, identify community goals for suicide reduction, and identify and prioritize activities to achieve goals.

Resources/Input:
- Plan of approach for community planning
- Timeline for community mobilization
- Florida's Toolkit and Resource Guide: Reducing Suicide in Your Community (http://www.flgov.com/suicide_prevention)
- Florida Suicide Prevention Coordinating Council's suggested prevention programs, actions and initiatives
- Florida coalition suggested prevention actions (see Tool Shed)
- Suicide Prevention Resource Center (http://www.sprc.org)
- Brainstorming techniques
- Evidence-Based and Best Practices for Suicide Prevention (http://www.sprc.org/featured_resources/bpr.index.asp)

Results/Output:
- Mobilized community stakeholders
- Logic Model
- Community suicide prevention goals
- Community action plan

Description:

Community planning may be conducted in one session or across multiple sessions. Some coalitions have held an all-day planning session that included guest speakers and activities of interest to meeting participants. Select a schedule that will yield the maximum number of participants. To encourage participation and continued engagement, conduct a well-planned, organized, and facilitated meeting.

Following are recommended planning activities:

a) Develop your mission statement.

There are several ways to approach this task. You may conduct a brainstorming session to develop the mission statement. Or, you may draft one to three mission statements prior to the meeting and let the meeting participants edit and select the final mission. Another approach is to develop your mission statement during the process of creating a logic model.

b) Create a logic model.

Effective logic models make a visual statement of the activities that will bring about change and the results you expect to see for the community and its people. A logic model keeps participants in the effort moving in the same direction by providing a common language and point of reference. Logic models energize and rally support for an initiative by declaring precisely what you're trying to accomplish and how (source: The Community Toolbox).

Before beginning the logic model, make sure that all planning participants have an equal understanding of suicide prevention and the information you uncovered so far. Develop a logic model to present a picture of how your effort or initiative is supposed to work. The logic model will clearly show why your strategy is a good solution to the problem at hand.

c) Create an action plan.

The more an action plan reflects the group's consensus of what is important to do, the more likely the actions are to be implemented. Use a structured brainstorming and prioritization process. Consider concept mapping software which produces a list of actions prioritized as to importance and/or other pre-selected categories.

d) Conduct an environmental scan.

Commitment to implementation does not occur simply because something is the right thing to do. Successful implementation is possible only if incentives are aligned in a way which supports the desired suicide prevention activities. For each major

organizational stakeholder, an understanding of these incentive systems becomes essential in predicting the support and potential barriers which need to be overcome.

An environmental scan identifies the factors that influence commitment of each major stakeholder, such as:
- What are the forces and pressures facing each of the major identified stakeholders?
- How do these forces and pressures affect the stakeholders' incentives and operations?
- How is a suicide prevention effort likely to fit into their particular organizational environment?
- How to craft a program which will help stakeholders achieve their goals or at least not inhibit their efforts?

The information sources identified in steps 1 through 3 are used to conduct an environmental scan. To conduct an environmental scan, look at the incentive systems as they apply to each of the major stakeholders. An incentive system is defined as the:
- Rewards and punishments dispensed by an organization.
- Mechanisms through which they are distributed.
- Assessment criteria used for evaluating performance to determine what the appropriate consequences of the performance should be.

There are four incentive systems that are major sources of reinforcement and punishment in an organization: external, official, unofficial, and intrinsic task characteristics. The structure and interaction of these various sources shape and maintain organizational behavior and must be taken into account when analyzing organizational behavior and determining what they are likely to support.

a) External Incentive System

The external incentive system is made up of the external task environment elements which regulate an organization, or which control important resources such as funders, licensing agencies, accreditation organizations, state or local governments. These external elements structure the rewards and punishments for the organization. The assessment criteria used by key task environment elements to measure the organization's performance, and determine whether it will be rewarded, is crucial in determining the nature of the internal (official) contingencies established by the organization. The willingness to support an activity such as suicide prevention will depend on whether it is presented in such a way that it does not conflict with these external pressures.

b) Official Incentive System

The official incentive system consists of the important incentives (e.g. promotions, assignments, job discretion, and training opportunities) distributed by an agency through its official processes and procedures according to agency set criteria. For

example, an administrator might promote and reward staff for raising suicide awareness, or might consider it to be a distraction from the organizations goals.

c) Informal Incentive System

Informal groups which form around work units, common jobs (e.g. secretarial or supervisory), union shops, race or ethnic identity, and professional affiliations can be considered informal incentive systems operating in the organization over which agency administrators have little control. These groups can play an important socialization function and can become an informal base of power in the organization as well. The attitudes of the group members towards suicide and suicide prevention and the peer pressure they can exert can either encourage or discourage active participation in suicide prevention activities. There are aspects of a particular job which a worker finds to be either intrinsically rewarding or aversive. For example, confronting suicide as an issue or becoming involved in suicide prevention activities on the job might be seem as either a meaningful opportunity to make a difference or an unpleasant added burden to one's normal responsibilities.

At the completion of step 3, your coalition has engaged stakeholders from a broad range of backgrounds and experience. You also have a mission statement, consensus on goals and actions, and a task or action plan. You also are aware of the incentives for each of your major stakeholders and are prepared to use these incentives to ensure implementation and continued engagement. You are now ready to proceed with initial implementation.