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Postvention as a Prevention Tool: Developing a Comprehensive Campus Response to Prevent Suicide Contagion

UNIVERSITY COUNSELING CENTER

University at Albany State University of New York

SPRC
SUICIDE
PREVENTION
RESOURCE
CENTER

Learning Objectives

1. Define postvention and its critical role in addressing and preventing suicide contagion;

2. Identify the importance of involving key stakeholders in the development, implementation, and evaluation of postvention protocols;

3. Identify and know how to address two key postvention issues – utilizing social media after a student suicide and planning memorial services - with an aim to prevent suicide contagion.

What is Postvention?

Postvention as a Prevention Tool

A Few Definitions

- "The provision of crisis intervention and other support after a suicide has occurred to address and alleviate possible effects of suicide." (SPRC Postvention Workgroup Definition)

- "… interventions occurring after a tragedy." (Meilman, 2006)

- "The goal of postvention is to reduce the negative impact of a suicide on 'survivors.'" (Cerel, & Campbell, 2008)

Postvention is Prevention
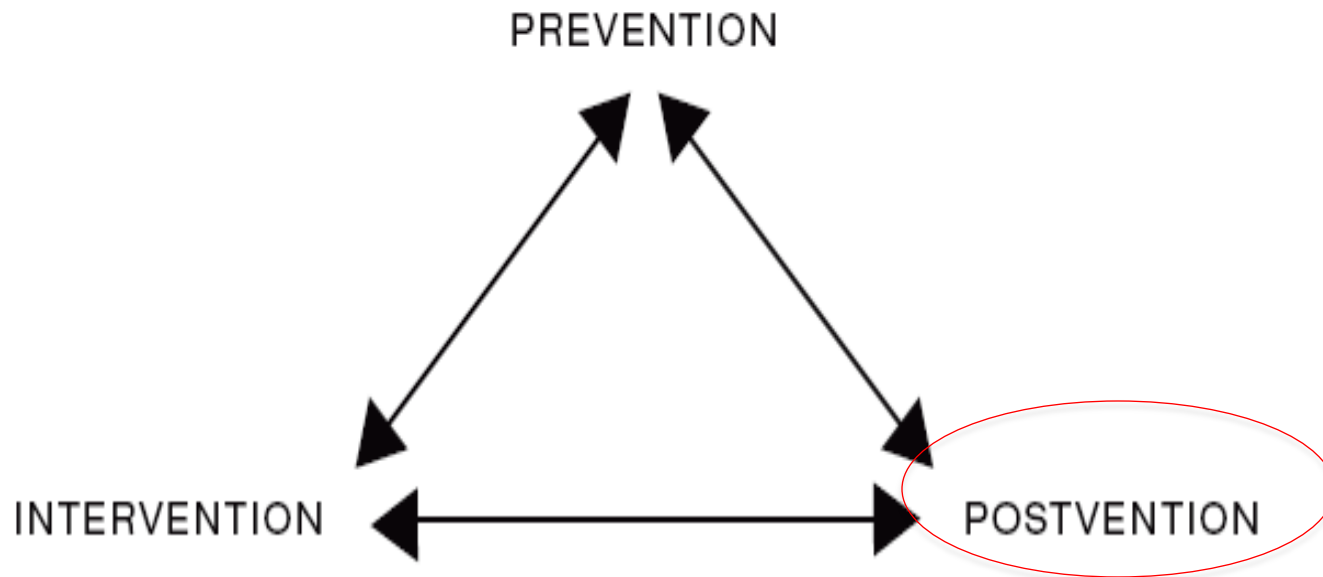
" Planning around one component impacts the planning (and ultimately the effectiveness) of the other two areas."

(The Jed Foundation, 2006)

Implementing and Evaluating Postvention Efforts

A Protocol is Key

Developing a Protocol

Considerations for Developing a Protocol

- First responders

- Communications with the campus community

- Communications with the media

Considerations for Developing a Protocol

- Types of support services

- Targeted outreach

- Debriefing with staff

- Lack of established protocol

Making the Most of Your Protocol

- During protocol development:

  - Include a broad base of stakeholders

  - Define the terminology you will use

  - Consider the ethnic, racial, cultural, and spiritual diversity of your student body

(The Jed Foundation, 2006)

Making the Most of Your Protocol

- Implementation:

  - Determine how you will disseminate and educate the campus community on protocol

  - Identify a "point person(s)" to respond to all questions about the protocol

  - Engage in regular table-top exercises

  - Develop a revision plan

(The Jed Foundation, 2006)

Special Issues in Postvention

Addressing Student, Campus, & Community Needs

Safe Reporting Guidelines

Working with the Media

- Sticking to protocol

- Preparation of materials prior to an incident

- Teachable moments

Postvention and Social Media

- Distribution of information and resources

- Monitoring student and campus response to a student suicide

- Collaboration with family to:

  - Ensure that families monitor deceased student's social networking sites
  - Bypass privacy settings that might prohibit interventions

- Awareness of Facebook guidelines on reporting suicidal online activity

Planning & Hosting Memorials

- Memorials for other types of deaths

- Multiple suicides

- Input from family

- Ensuring safe messaging

- Other ways to honor the deceased

Example: Georgia Tech

HOME | HISTORY | PARTICIPANT INFORMATION | HONOREES | SCHEDULE | PARKING

When the Whistle Blows

A Rembrance Ceremony

HISTORY: A TECH TRADITION

When the Whistle Blows is one of the Institute's most revered traditions. Established in 2001, *When the Whistle Blows* honors the memory of those enrolled students or employees of the Institute who have died during the previous year.

The ceremony is steeped in the richest of Georgia Tech traditions. The Ramblin' Reck, a 1930 Model A Ford and the Institute's first official mascot, leads families into the ceremony. Members of the Army, Navy, and Air Force ROTC units serve as escorts for the families, as Georgia Tech was one of the first schools in the nation to have a Reserved Officers Training Corps program. A unity candle is lit, representing the Georgia Tech community—more than 20,000 students, staff, faculty, and administrators who compromise the Institute. The Alma Mater reminds us of our Tech ancestry and relays the hope that we will always be united as a community.

The Whistle originated in the late 1800s at the time of Lyman Hall, the second president of Georgia Tech. The sound of Tech's steam whistle resounded throughout Atlanta, becoming not only a landmark for the Institute, but also a timepiece for the surrounding community. Throughout the decades, the Whistle continued to keep time, whether calling students to the classroom or celebrating a football victory. Today, as in years past, the sound of the Whistle always marks the end of one chapter and the beginning of something new. It remains a deeply engrained tradition unique to Georgia Tech, and we proudly remember those who are no longer with us by a salute from the Whistle. After the Whistle is blown for each of the community members who have died over the last year, a final blast from the Whistle memorializes all extended members of our campus community who have died (alumni, noncurrent faculty and staff, and friends of the Institute).

Blow on, stern Monarch of Tech's mighty crew,
Be always firm and staid:
To your compelling call we'll e're be true
Til each his part has played.

Taken from "A Tribute to the Whistle" as printed in the 1914 Blueprint Signed, A.D.A.

http://www.whenthewhistleblows.gatech.edu/

Questions?

A Case Example

Addressing Student Suicide through Postvention

University at Albany Profile

- University Center within 64-campus SUNY System
- Urban Setting
- Research University
- NCAA Division I
- Students:
  - Undergraduates -   13,457
  - Graduate Students -   4,977
- Faculty:
- Employees:
- Degree Programs:
  - Undergraduate -   61
  - Masters -   89
  - Doctorate -   39
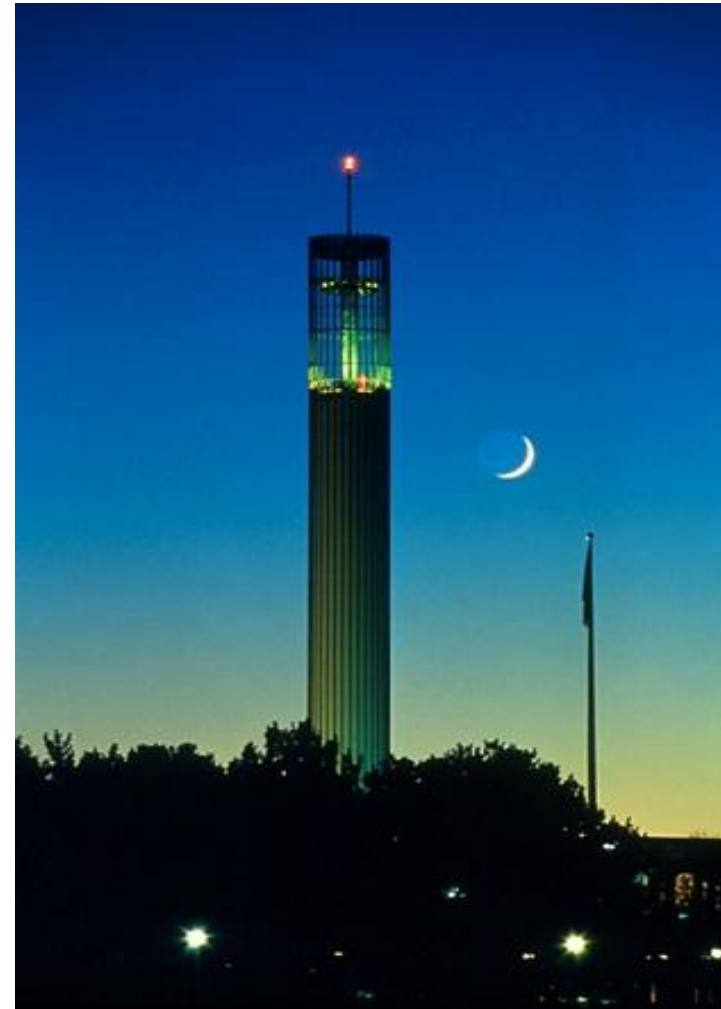
# of UAlbany Comprehensive Prevention Program

✓ **Presidential Leadership**
✓ **Campus Task Force: "BRisk"**
✓ **Student Involvement/Leadership**
✓ **Social Marketing/Social Norms**
✓ **Campus-Community Partnerships**
✓ **Education**
✓ **Gatekeeper Training**
✓ **Early Intervention**
✓ **Policy Evaluation/Enforcement**
✓ **Parental Involvement**
✓ **Treatment & Referral**
✓ **Research and Program Evaluation**
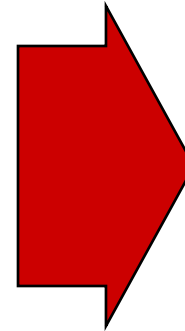
Comprehensive Program

Spectrum of Intervention Response: Suicide Prevention
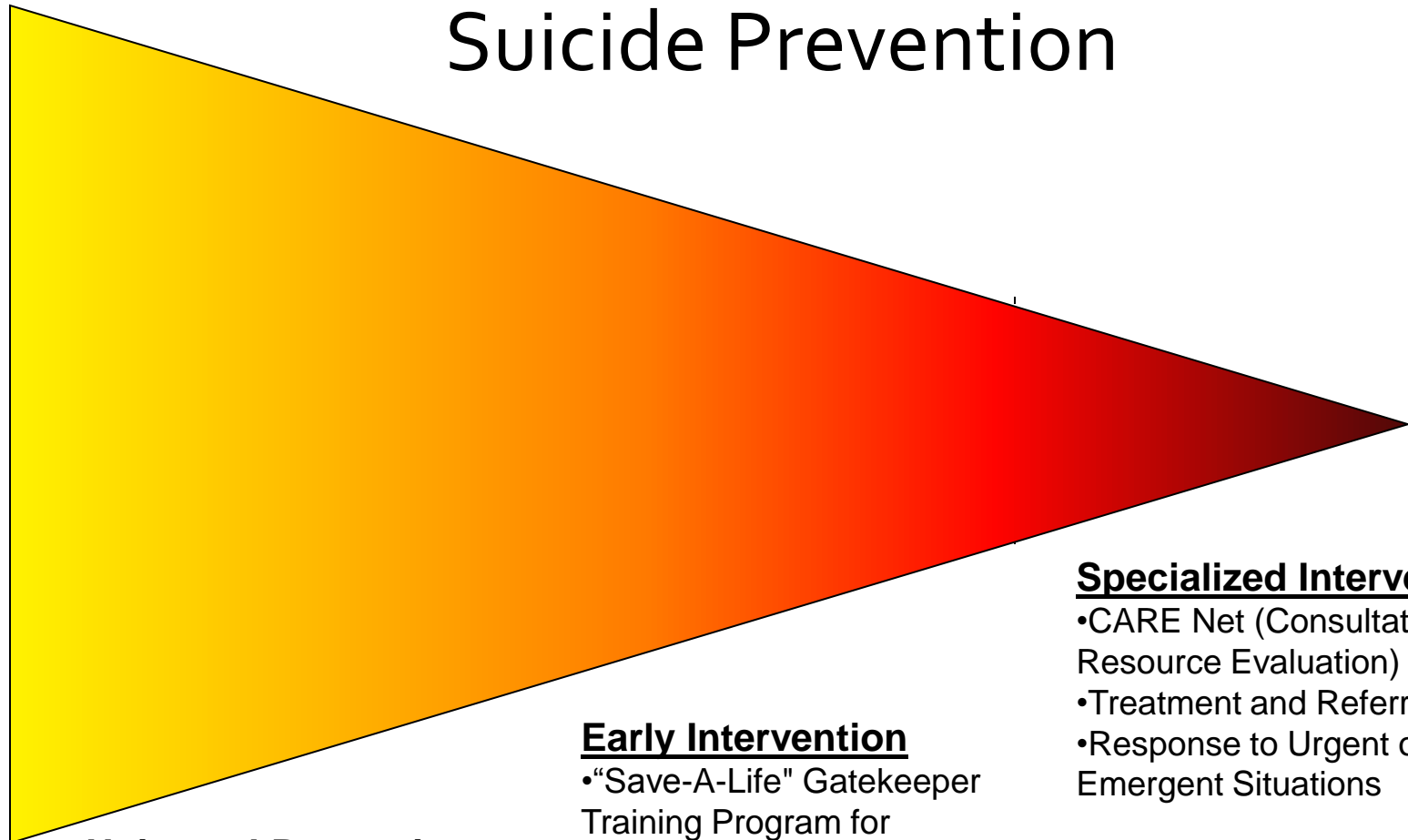
Universal Prevention
•Stigma Reduction Media Campaign
•Peer Services (Peer Education and Hotline Services)
•Educational Brochures

Early Intervention
•"Save-A-Life" Gatekeeper Training Program for Faculty, Staff, and Students
•PRISM (Proximate Risk Index and Screening Measure) Screenings
•Consultations with faculty, staff, students, and parents

Specialized Interventions
•CARE Net (Consultation and Resource Evaluation) Program
•Treatment and Referral
•Response to Urgent or Emergent Situations

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The STEPS Comprehensive Suicide Prevention Program Model

Sustaining Student Success

Preventing Suicide Risk Behaviors & Promoting Healthy Behaviors

Engaging Students, Faculty, Staff, & Families in Education About Suicide Prevention

Training Potential Campus Responders & Strengthening a Campus Comprehensive Care Network

Screening and Early Intervention for Students at Risk for Suicide and Related Risk Factors

"Partnerships Working to Prevent Student Suicide… One Step at a Time"

Areas for Postvention

- Student death and other serious campus incidents

  - Response guided by *Responding to Students in Crisis* protocol

- Suicide/homicide attempt or incident in which intent is evident

  - Response guided by *CARE Net (Consultation and Resource Evaluation) Program* protocol

Responding to Students in Crisis

1) Provide support and assistance to the students in crisis and to insure their safety and the safety of others.

2) Respond, as confidentiality regulations permit, to persons or groups such as:
   a. the student's parents, legal guardians, and/or significant others,
   b. the student's friends, roommates, suitemates, and hall residents,
   c. various University offices to provide services and support to the student and other affected members of the University community,
   d. the University and Albany communities, as appropriate.

3) Address system-wide issues surrounding the crisis.

4) Work toward the prevention of similar crises in the future.

Responding to Student in Crisis Key Elements

- Confidentiality

- Judgment

- Coordination

- Support

The CARE Net Program: Postvention for Suicide Risk

- Assess present suicide risk

- Evaluate student's willingness and ability to refrain from threatened and actual self-injurious behaviors

- Provide consultation regarding recommended psychiatric, psychological, and educational services

The CARE Net Program: Postvention for Suicide Risk

- Minimize disruption of normal functioning for roommates and suitemates in the residence community

- Augment existing crisis intervention services, psychological treatment resources, and consultation with Residential Life staff and students

Addressing Suicide Contagion: Spring 2011

<u>Timeline</u>

- **February 2011**

- **April 2011**

- **May 2011**

- **Fall 2011**

- **Spring 2012**

- **Future Prevention Efforts**

Discussion

- Now let's hear from you

Thank You!

Questions?

Resources

- **University at Albany Crisis Protocol and Postvention Materials:**
- http://www.albany.edu/studentaffairs/faculty/albany_only/
- **Postvention Workshop Session at the 2009 GLS Grantee Meeting:** http://www.sprc.org/grantees/campus/2009/agenda010909.asp
- **CDC Recommendations for a Community Plan for the Prevention and Containment of Suicide Clusters:** http://wonder.cdc.gov/wonder/prevguid/p0000214/p0000214.asp
- Centre for Suicide Prevention. **School Memorials After a Suicide: Helpful or Harmful?:** Available by request at http://suicideinfo.ca/AboutUs/ContactUs.aspx
- Cerel, J. , & Campbell, F. (2008). Suicide survivors seeking mental health services: A preliminary examination of the role of an active postvention model. *Suicide and Life-Threatening Behavior, 38(1),* 30-34.
- Clinician Survivor Task Force. **Clinicians as Survivors: After a Suicide Loss:** http://mypage.iusb.edu/~jmcintos/therapists_mainpg.htm
- Georgia Institute of Technology. **When the Whistle Blows:** http://www.whenthewhistleblows.gatech.edu/
- Harvard School of Public Health. **Means Matter:** http://www.hsph.harvard.edu/means-matter/
- The Jed Foundation. **Framework for developing institutional protocols for the acutely distressed student:** http://www.jedfoundation.org/professionals/programs-and-research/framework
- Maine Youth Suicide Prevention Program. **Media Guidelines for School Administrators Who May Interact with Reporters about Youth Suicide:** http://www.maine.gov/suicide/professionals/program/mediaschool.htm

Resources (continued)

- Maine Youth Suicide Prevention Program. **Youth Suicide Prevention, Intervention & Postvention Guidelines: A Resource for School Personnel:** http://www.maine.gov/suicide/docs/Guidelines%2010-2009--w%20discl.pdf
- Meilman, P. W., & Hall, T. M. (2006). Aftermath of tragic events. The development and use of community support meetings on a university campus. *Journal of American College Health, 54(6),* 382-384.
- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline. **How to Report Suicidal Users on Facebook:** http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org/App_Files/Media/PDF/How%20to%20Report%20Suicidal%20Users%20on%20Facebook.pdf
- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline. **Lifeline Online Postvention Manual:** http://www.sprc.org/library/LifelineOnlinePostventionManual.pdf
- **Recommendations for Reporting on Suicide:** http://reportingonsuicide.org
- Sally Spencer-Thomas. **When Tragedy Strikes: Suicide Postvention on a College Campus:** http://bereavedbysuicide.com/articles/postvention-programs/when-tragedy-strikes-suicide-postvention-on-a-college-campus/
- SPAN USA & SPRC. **Guide to engaging the media in suicide prevention:** http://www.sprc.org/library/media_guide.pdf
- SPRC. **After a Suicide: Recommendations for Religious Services & Memorial Observances:** http://www.sprc.org/library/aftersuicide.pdf
- SPRC & AFSP. **After a Suicide: A Toolkit for Schools**: http://sprc.org/afterasuicideforschools.asp
- SPRC. **Safe and Effective Messaging for Suicide Prevention:** http://www.sprc.org/library/SafeMessagingfinal.pdf

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