



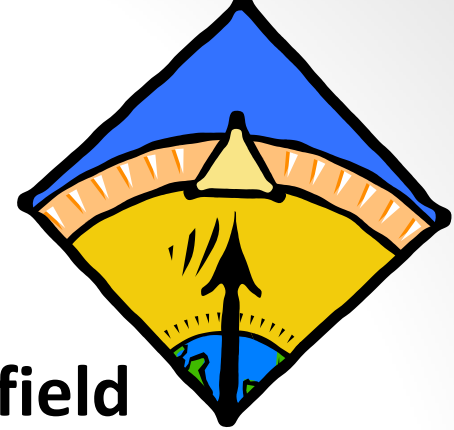
Upstream Youth Suicide Prevention:

A View From the Field

Maureen Underwood LCSW

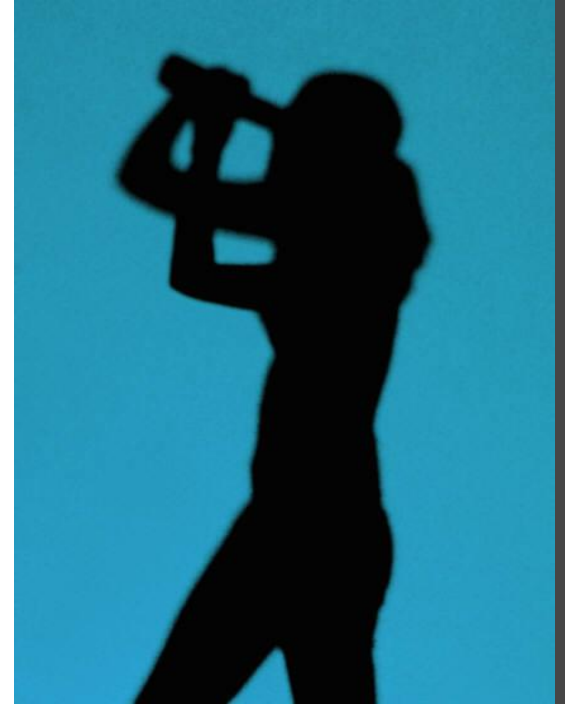


Our Starting Points:



Youth suicide prevention is a young field

- Began in 1980's with universal school-based prevention programs
- As knowledge base expanded, program directions have grown
- Current state of the field
 - 2nd & 3rd generation universal school programs
 - Research on identification of risk factors & warning signs
 - Case identification- through screening, gatekeeper awareness
 - Crisis intervention/postvention services
 - Development of evidence-based treatment



Using historical perspective...
... TO EXPAND DIRECTION

Context #1 for Upstream Prevention

- Concept of “competent communities” -
 - *Everyone is committed to each other’s welfare and knows where and how to get help if a community member is in need*

(Iscoe, 1973)

Context # 2: Primary Prevention

- Primary prevention strategies provide the opportunity to truly get in front of a problem by addressing the conditions that enable it

Characteristics of Successful Prevention Initiatives

- Promote protective factors
- Strive to be comprehensive
- Are developmentally & culturally appropriate
- Developed in collaboration with a representative cross-section of community members to incorporate diverse cultural beliefs, practices & community norms
- Include a systematic method to determine program effectiveness and promote continuous quality improvement
- Can be sustained & expanded over time

(www.icadvinc.org, 2013)

Context # 3-

Mechanisms for Reducing Suicidal Behavior in Youth

1. Reduce the incidence/severity of risk factors for suicidal behaviors
2. Support 'healthier' settings that reduce the acceleration of individual risk factors
3. Reduce triggering events (e.g. bullying, binge drinking)
4. Enhance intergenerational processes
5. Encourage peer to peer spread of protective norms

- WYMAN, 2012, Recommendations of 2012 Expert Panel

5 Mechanisms for Reducing Suicidal Behavior in Youth

- Reduce the incidence/severity of risk factors for suicidal behaviors
- Support 'healthier' settings that reduce the acceleration of individual risk factors
- Reduce triggering events (e.g. bullying, binge drinking)
- Enhance intergenerational processes
- Encourage peer to peer spread of protective norms

Children of Divorce Intervention Project
Families Preventing & Overcoming Depression

I Can Problem Solve
Good Behavior Game
Parenting Initiatives
Communities that Care
ParentCorps

Oleweus Bullying Prevention

Police Athletic League
Boys & Girls Clubs

Sources of Strength

Children of Divorce Intervention Project

- Started in 1983
- Minimize the emotional and behavioral problems that may result when children experience divorce in their families
- Increase children's ability to identify and appropriately express their divorce-related feelings
- Increase children's understanding and acceptance of divorce-related concepts
- Reduce children's anxiety and worry about their family circumstances that can interfere with academic achievement
- Build confidence by teaching specific skills to help children cope with a variety of challenges
 - www.childrensinstitute.net/programs/codip

Families Preventing and Overcoming Depression (FamPod)

- Started in 1979
- Addresses depression as a family calamity
- Prevention program for families in crisis-building family strengths, resiliency, and preventing depression in children
- Multiple cultural adaptations

www.fampod.org

I Can Problem Solve

- Developed 1971 by Myrna Shure
- Implemented in 24 states with 400,000 kids
- Pre school, Kindergarten, first-grade aged youth
- Sites: schools, after school, community settings
- Focus on interpersonal problem solving skills, prosocial behavior, problem behaviors, school bonding
- Used in urban, rural/frontier schools
 - www.prevention.org/icps.asp

Good Behavior Game (PAX)

- Created in 1969
- Reinforces voluntary control over attention in the classroom and reduces the susceptibility to accidental negative reinforcement from peers
- Can be implemented by a single teacher- does not require “whole’ school buy in
- Results: reducing mental illness and substance abuse, increasing high school graduation and college entry

<http://bit.ly?PAXGRbiblio>

Oleweus Bullying Prevention Program

- Published in 1978
- Most researched and best known bullying prevention for students 5 to 15 years old
- Whole school program – addresses the school like a ‘competent community’
- Goals are to improve peer relations in the school and make the school a more positive place for students to learn and develop
 - 30-70% reduction in student reports of being bullied or bullying-similar reports for peers and teachers
 - Significant reduction in student reports of general antisocial behavior in schools
 - Improvements in classroom climate

www.violencepreventionworks.org

Sources of Strength



- Developed in late 1990's by Mark LoMurray
- Uses **peer leaders** - from diverse social cliques - to change school-level norms
- Enhances **connection with trusted adults** who then refer or support youth
- Enhances **coping with distress** and suicide-triggers
- Promote **acceptability of engaging adults** for help (reduce codes of silence)

sourcesofstrength.org



COMMUNITY & STATE APPROACHES

Communities that Care

- Began in 1981 as an OJJDP
- Creates community and stakeholder organizing platform that helps community leaders scientifically identify problems with their community and address them through the installation of proven prevention programs, policies & strategies to enhance youth development in communities
- Focuses on strengthening protective factors that can buffer young people from problem behaviors and promote positive youth development

[www.sdr.org/ctcresource/About CTC NEW.htm](http://www.sdr.org/ctcresource/About_CTC_NEW.htm).

ParentCorps: A Cross System Partnership w/NYU Child Study Center (Puorto-Conte , 2013)

- A new NY initiative to work with identified Pre-K programs in the Bronx for September, 2013 implementation.
- Family-centered, school-based intervention that is culturally-relevant and accessible to all families in high-need communities as their children enter school (ages 3-5)
- A universal prevention approach that brings together parents in the school community to create a sustainable network of effective and involved parents to help young children succeed.

www.aboutourkids.org/research/institutes_programs/institute_prevention_science/programs

Community Youth Clubs

- ***Boys and Girls Clubs of America***
 - Started in 1860
 - Philosophy of taking kids off the street and promoting their development toward a successful, productive future
 - Clubs provide: a safe place to learn & grow, ongoing relationships with caring, adult professionals, life-enhancing programs & character developing experiences, hope and opportunity
- ***Police Athletic League (PAL)***
 - Started in 1914
 - Philosophy: “it’s better to build youth than to mend adults”
 - Chapters prevent juvenile crime and violence by providing civic , athletic, recreational & educational opportunities

Alaska State Plan

- “Casting the Net Upstream” - A call to action
- Alaskan individuals, families, communities and governments must take ownership of the problem- and the solutions
- Strategic organization:
 - Wellness Promotion
 - Suicide Prevention
 - Crisis Intervention
 - Postvention



Challenges of Prevention Programs

- Implementing with fidelity
- Recognizing many behaviors that affect well being do not require complex intervention
- Generalizability? Program dissemination is unlikely to affect practices or behaviors that fall outside of the scope of the program
- Diffusion criteria are not easily met
- Not evidence-based programs or on an approved list
- Cost
- Existing programs that have been evaluated show modest effect, weak generalization & difficulty with maintenance or sustainability

[Embry, 2008 accessed online at www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PM2526125](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PM2526125)

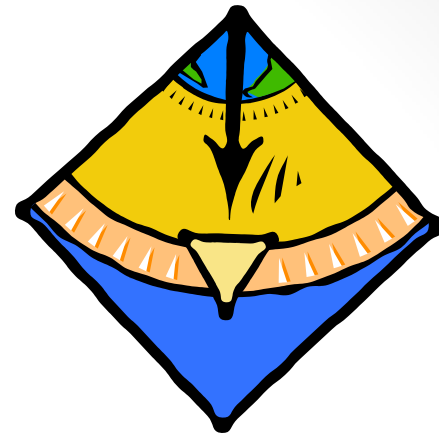
So What's Your Take-Away?

- Widen your vision- recognize we can't do it alone and we have a lot to learn about enhancing protection and minimizing risk from people outside the mental health field
- Own the challenge- it's up to you to engage other groups in recognizing the importance of suicide prevention initiatives
- Look outside your own backyard for upstream initiatives that already exist in your communities and states

So What's Your Take-Away?

- Remember-just because a program is evidence based doesn't meet it meets all needs- must be culturally & developmentally competent!
- Speak up when you see resources being spent on programs that are neither evidence-based , best practices, or developmentally /culturally relevant
- Believe in the importance of evaluation!
Integrate it into all program initiatives- and work with community partners to add suicide prevention as a relevant program measure

Our ending point:



- Recognize suicide as a problem for everyone in the community- you are not alone!
- Connection is the key. Take advantage of opportunities to work effectively for prevention by effectively engaging with diverse groups with a range of messages and messengers
- Be optimistic! Practice what you preach!

It is

shelter of each other

in the



that we live

References



- Brave Heart, M.Y.H. (2007) The Impact of Historical Trauma: The Example of the Native Community. In Marian Bussey & Judy Wise, (Eds.), Transforming Trauma: Empowerment Responses. New York: Columbia University Press
- Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (2006). Connectedness as a strategic direction for the prevention of suicidal behavior. Atlanta, GA: National Center for Injury Control & Prevention
- DeSocio J. & Hootman J. (2004). Children's mental health and school success. *Journal of School Nursing*: 20 (4), 189-196.
- Gladstone TRG, Beardslee,WR, & O'Conner EE. (2011) The prevention of adolescent depression. *Psychiatric clinics of North America*, 34 (1),35-52.

References



- Hawkins JD, Catalano RF, Kosterman R, Abbott R, Hill KG (1999) Preventing adolescent health-risk behaviors by strengthening protection during childhood. *Archives of Pediatrics & Adolescent Medicine*, 153 (3) 226-234.
- Hawton K. (1998). A national target for reducing suicide. *BMJ* 317:156-157
- Iscoe I. (1973) Community psychology and the competent community. *American Psychologist*, 29 (8), 607-613.
- King, CA (1998) Suicide across the life span: Pathways to prevention. *Suicide and Life-Threatening Behavior*, 28(4), 328-337.
- Winslow EB, Sandler I, Wolchik SA, & Carr C (2013) Building resilience in all children. A public health approach. In S. Goldstein & R. Brooks (Eds.) *Handbook of Resilience in Children* (2nd ed.) Kluwer Academic/Plenum Publishers

References



- World Health Organization (WHO) (2002). World report on violence and health. Geneva: WHO.
- Wyman, P.A, Brown, C.H., LoMurray, M., Schmeelk-Cone, K., Petrova, M., Yu, Q. et al (2010) An outcome evaluation of the Sources of Strength suicide prevention program delivered by adolescent peer leaders in high schools. American Journal of Public Health, 100 (9), 1653-1661
- Yip, P. (2005) A public health approach to suicide prevention. Hong Kong Journal of Psychiatry; 15:29-31



SOCIETY *for the*
PREVENTION *of*
TEEN SUICIDE

www.sptsusa.org