Lifelines Curriculum
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Description
The Lifelines Curriculum is a school-based suicide prevention program for middle school and high school students. The Lifelines Curriculum is a school wide program that teaches students and staff the facts of suicide, how to tell when someone is at risk, and their role in suicide prevention. Often referred to as a 'gatekeeper program,' Lifelines provides suicide awareness resources for students, parents, school staff and administrators to help everyone in the school community recognize when a student is becoming at-risk for suicide and when, how and where to access help. Designed to fit seamlessly into a health class, Lifelines has four primary goals:

- To increase help-seeking behavior
- To increase staff and student abilities to identify a student who is becoming at-risk for suicide
- To respond correctly when a student divulges suicidal thinking or intentionality
- To actively get help for the at-risk student, even if confidentiality has to be compromised

Lifelines is intended to become an ongoing part of the school background, language and culture in contrast to traditional screening-based approaches (e.g., TeenScreen, SOS). The Lifelines Curriculum states that approaches based on periodic screenings are seen as intrusive by school staff and administrators and are likely miss those who become at-risk for suicide between screening events. Lifelines Curriculum, in contrast, makes it everyone's job to be aware and to seek help if suicidal intentionality becomes apparent, effectively making it a continual process. There are four key components/stages to implement the Lifelines Curriculum in a school:

1) Administrative Buy-in – The Lifelines Curriculum provides tools for school administrators to review the school's internal and external resources for responding to students who are identified as at risk for suicide. School policies and procedures are then amended to include protocols for suicide prevention and intervention. Sample language and policies are included with the Lifelines program materials.

2) Faculty and Staff Training – The Lifelines Curriculum training materials and optional one-day training explain the Lifelines approach to school suicide prevention, review facts and myths regarding student suicide, and explain the role of school staff in suicide prevention. Topics covered in the program manual and training day include:

- Information on how to identify at-risk students
- Listening skills for student verbal, non-verbal and behavioral warning signs
- Gauging a student's risk once warning signs have raised some concern
- Referring at-risk students to designated school resources
- Updated policies and procedures for school faculty and staff when presented with suicidal statements or concerns
- Reinforcement of teachers' natural strengths as good listeners and caring/competent professionals

3) Parent Education Night – The presentation for parents explains how the Lifelines Curriculum works within the school environment to enlist youth and staff to detect and respond to students who are at-risk for suicide. The presentation gives parents answers about youth suicide and prevention and involves them in the school's suicide prevention activities. Topics covered in the parent presentation include:

- Understanding the Lifelines Curriculum

- Understanding the school's policies and procedures
- Recognizing signs of trouble in their children
- Addressing parental resistance- "Not my kid…"
- Knowing what to do and where to go for help or resources
- Increasing parents help seeking behavior with strategies to involve mental health professionals
- Empowering parents to ask their child's questions
- Understanding how to respond to suicide warning signs for other parents' children

4) Student Curriculum – The Lifelines Curriculum itself consists of four 45-minute lessons designed to be delivered in the health education classroom. The detailed lesson plans and video resources cover facts about suicide and each student's role in suicide prevention. The lesson plans also cover actual prevention resources available at the school and in the local community. The videos included with the curriculum show students a scenario depicting appropriate and inappropriate responses to a suicidal peer and actual responses of three students to a suicidal peer after participating in the Lifelines Curriculum. Role-playing and other experiential learning exercises let the students practice what to do when faced with a suicidal peer with an emphasis on seeking adult help. An intentional side benefit of teaching students how to help a friend is that students who have suicidal thoughts or intentions themselves may learn how to get help as well. Topics covered in the student curriculum include:

- Knowledge of relevant facts about suicide including warning signs
- How to recognize the threat of suicidal thoughts and behavior and to take them seriously
- Knowledge about how to respond to troubled peers and whom to go to for help
- Demonstrations of methods of intervention & help-seeking

<u>Characteristics</u>

- Population
  - Gender – female and male
  - Ages – adolescents (13-17 years old)
  - Races – White, Asian, Black or African American, Hispanic or Latino, Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander
- Risk, Protective & Causal Factors
  - Myths and misconceptions about teen suicide (R)
  - Misconceptions about suicide risk in self and others (R)
  - School staff unease discussing suicide risk with students (R)
  - Lack of clear and understood school policies and procedures for at-risk students (R)
  - Lack of suicide intervention empowerment or skills in peers and adults (R)
  - Poor help seeking behavior for self and for others (R)
  - Increased knowledge about suicide(P)
  - Improved attitudes about suicide prevention and intervention (P)
  - Improved skills and attitudes about seeking adult help (P)
  - An active response model to a friend's suicide warning signs (P)
- IOM Category (level of care)
  - Universal – Middle School and High School age students in a school setting

<u>Effectiveness</u>

Compared to a matched control group, the students who participated in the Lifelines Curriculum:

- had significantly greater knowledge about suicide
- demonstrated significantly increased positive attitudes toward suicide prevention

- demonstrated significantly increased positive attitudes toward help-seeking behaviors to prevent suicide for themselves and others
- were significantly more likely to respond appropriately when asked how they would respond to a *potentially* suicidal peer
- were significantly more likely to respond appropriately when asked how they would respond to a *clearly* suicidal peer

Program Delivery

The Lifelines Curriculum itself consists of four 45-minute lessons with detailed lesson plans and video resources. The curriculum is designed to be delivered in middle and high school health education classes.

Session 1- When is a Friend in Trouble? Presents the importance of discussing suicide and basic suicide facts. It also covers typical ways teens react when a friend shows suicidal behavior, and how to separate personal feelings about suicide from responsible actions.

Session 2: How do I Help a Friend? Presents and discusses warning signs using suicide factsheets. It presents three basic suicide intervention steps and discusses specific words an at-risk person might use when thinking about suicide.

Session 3: Where Can I Go to Get Help? Presents more detailed discussion on how to recognize warning signs of suicide and the steps in a successful peer intervention. Session 3 also identifies actual local school resources and procedures for responding to suicidal students and how to identify those adults to turn to in a crisis situation.

Session 4- How Can I Use What I've Learned? Uses scripted role play exercises to practice assisting a peer contemplating suicide and getting them to seek help. For example, one exercise demonstrates the value of getting the at-risk person (whether themselves or someone else) to sign a "Help-Seeking Pledge."

Considerations for use in Idaho

The Lifelines Curriculum is an inexpensive, school-based suicide awareness and action training program designed be delivered by school teachers in existing middle and high school health classrooms. The program purchase includes reproducible materials and presentations for school administrators, school staff, parents and the student body. Beyond the nominal program purchase price of $225, the cost of program implementation is essentially the use of four health class sessions. There is also a cost in that school and counseling staff will likely see more referrals and intervene more often. This is a desirable outcome, however, and by using then entire school community to identify potential suicides, constitutes a cost-effective method to bring students at risk for suicide to the attention of the school's mental health professionals.

Training & Costs

The basic $225 Lifelines Curriculum program package alone is sufficient to implement the program in a school. The kit contains CD-ROMs that include reproducible materials of all program materials as well as the two DVD-based program videos. Chapter 1 of the implementation manual for the Lifelines Curriculum may be previewed at: http://www.hazelden.org/web/public/document/2759_lifelines.pdf. The program vendor, the Hazelden Foundation, also offers onsite training for $2,200 plus the trainer's

travel expenses. The training does not include the cost of the program, which would likely need to be purchased for each delivery location (e.g., school).

An alternative method to implementing the Lifelines Curriculum in Idaho is a Trainer of Trainers certification. This has proven to be a cost effective way to bring other high quality evidence-based programs to Idaho. The current cost for the two-day Lifelines Curriculum Trainer of Trainers training is $4,200 plus trainer travel and expenses. In addition, each participant will need a copy of the $225 Lifelines Curriculum kit.

Dissemination & Support

The basic $225 Lifelines Curriculum contains a CD-ROM with all program materials in ready to print format. The program package also contains DVD instructional videos, school readiness assessment tools, implementation guidelines, parent materials and presentations, and quality assurance outcome evaluation instruments. The program vendor offers consultation, on-site training and a train-the-trainer certification.

Contact Information

Roxanne Schladweiler
Executive Director of Sales
Hazelden Publishing and Educational Services
15251 Pleasant Valley Road
Center City, MN 55012

Phone: (800) 328-9000
E-mail: rschladweiler@hazelden.org

Website: http://www.hazelden.org/web/go/lifelines

Other program synopses

NREPP: http://www.nrepp.samhsa.gov/programfulldetails.asp?PROGRAM_ID=178
SPRC: http://www.sprc.org/featured_resources/bpr/ebpp_PDF/lifelines.pdf
Maine Youth Suicide Prevention Program website: http://www.state.me.us/suicide
Hazelden: http://www.hazelden.org/OA_HTML/ibeCZzpEntry.jsp?go=item&item=14484

Chapter 1 of the Lifelines Curriculum implementation manual:
http://www.hazelden.org/web/public/document/2759_lifelines.pdf

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