



CalMHSAs Program Partner Spotlight

Suicide Prevention Training Workforce Enhancement Program

LivingWorks Education

Embodied in California’s Mental Health Movement, Each Mind Matters, is the idea that each of us has the power to save a life by stopping suicide. The California Mental Health Services Authority’s (CalMHSAs) partnership with LivingWorks Education (LivingWorks) makes that concept a reality by delivering suicide intervention trainings that save lives. LivingWorks, which has been training individuals in suicide intervention for the past 30 years, is guided by the beliefs that suicide intervention should be a major part of every community’s suicide prevention strategy, and that a one-on-one relationship between a person at risk and a competent helper represents a unique opportunity of effecting a lifesaving or life-altering change.

Impact

To date, CalMHSAs has trained 230 ASIST Trainers and 101 safeTALK Trainers. These CalMHSAs Trainers have conducted 153 workshops, which in turn have trained 2,844 people in suicide intervention.

LivingWorks’ partnership with CalMHSAs has greatly expanded the suicide intervention training resources across the state, enabling over 2,800 Californians to participate in one of four life-saving trainings to date.

Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST)

ASIST is a two-day interactive workshop in suicide first aid

where participants learn to recognize when someone may be at risk of suicide and respond in ways that help increase the at-risk individual’s immediate safety and link them to further help. The ASIST training allows participants to learn how to keep people in danger of suicide safe for now, and prevent suicidal behavior.

Powerful Intervention Model

“As a licensed therapist before going through the ASIST training, I was annoyed at having to do a ‘required’ training, but ASIST helped me realize that despite my training, I was too quick to pull a person at risk toward making a safety plan. After ASIST, I learned how to sit with someone in their difficult thoughts about wanting to die until they could come up with a reason to live and take ownership over their own need for safety.

The ASIST training is done through internationally standardized learning materials, with examples tailored to local community needs. Participants learn what a person at risk may need in order to keep them safe and how to effectively intervene. ASIST teaches

I personally used the ASIST model three times within the first two weeks after the training. I helped a client, a friend and a family member who are all still alive and doing very well today. At the next possible opportunity, I jumped at the chance to do the training of trainers program. Now I train others in ASIST and have run six groups of trainees.” -- ASIST Trainer



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how to identify potential suicide risk, and participants are encouraged to share and reflect on their attitudes about suicide and suicide intervention.

Over one million people worldwide have taken the ASIST workshop, and the training has been done in English, Spanish, French, Korean, Norwegian, and Inuktitut. It is also available in Braille and as a webinar.

ASIST Training for Trainers

The ASIST Training for Trainers (T4T) course trains persons with existing training experience to conduct the two-day ASIST workshop. Over five days, individuals learn the content of ASIST and the skills needed to conduct the workshop. The course and the ongoing support of experienced LivingWorks trainers provide a cost-effective way to develop suicide prevention competence within the community. Local training capacity is developed, through the guidance of a central agency dedicated to the quality of the program.

Saving the Life of a Child

“Earlier this year, while talking with a member of my family, I recognized ‘invitations’ about suicide. I then asked my family member if they were talking or thinking about suicide. They said yes. We continued talking, through tears and with respect, we came up with a plan for safety. I called seeking support for them and connections in the state of residence for this family member. I was able to connect my family member with caregivers in the state of residence. Never in a million years would I have ever thought that I would have needed to use the skills learned in ASIST on a member of my family. I am eternally grateful for the tools and skills to have this very important conversation and keep my loved one safe from suicide.” – ASIST Trainer

Additionally, LivingWorks continues to develop on-going learning activities and opportunities for individuals who have gone through the training. Through ASIST curricula upgrades, the latest being ASIST version 11, trainees can continue learning techniques to save lives based on updated research and international feedback from participants. LivingWorks also provides support to the participants after the trainings in the form of newsletters, phone calls, and emails.

safeTALK

safeTALK is a half-day training in English or Spanish that alerts community members to signs that a person may be considering

suicide. While most people at risk of suicide signal their distress and invite help, many opportunities for intervention are overlooked. Participants in safeTALK learn to recognize when someone may have thoughts of suicide and to respond in ways that connect them with further suicide intervention help.

safeTALK also has a Training for Trainers program where trainers prepare to learn the content as well as how to facilitate the safeTALK workshop. The trainers experience a safeTALK presentation, and then complete assigned tasks, practice presentations, and go through



coaching to learn program structure, process, and content of training. Trainers also learn how to facilitate various tasks drawing on the wisdom of the group and providing positive feedback to participants, and learn how to train based on a set of core beliefs. The safeTALK program complements ASIST by sharing the same beliefs about suicide prevention. ASIST caregivers complete the process that safeTALK helpers start.

suicideTALK

suicideTALK is a 90-minute to half-day session that engages participants in a conversation about suicide and invites them to become more aware of suicide prevention opportunities in their community. Dealing openly with the stigma around suicide, suicideTALK focuses upon the question, "Should we talk about suicide?" suicideTALK builds participants' comfort in talking about suicide and how personal and community beliefs about suicide can be stigmatizing and affect safety.

Helping an ASIST Trainee:

"I am a new ASIST trainer, and I was co-facilitating my first ASIST workshop. I went to use the ladies' washroom; the door was left unlocked by one of the participants of my workgroup. The participant invited me in stating she wanted to talk because she was having thoughts of suicide. I listened to this person's story about suicide, and asked this participant if she would allow me to get more help. Though I was scared, I applied the ASIST model, securing safety for the participant and asking for help in next steps. The training team then supported me and discussed who best to support the person at risk. We had a great conversation and the participant felt heard and supported. She also committed to keeping safe for now."

– ASIST Trainer

suicideTALK also provides skills in suicide alertness, using concepts from safeTALK. suicideTALK can also be customized for any community, such as the military, tribal communities, youth, and older adult versions.

esuicideTALK

LivingWorks recognizes that in some communities face-to-face training is not easily accomplished. esuicideTALK was created to allow individuals to become aware of suicide prevention concepts where immediate access to training opportunities such as safeTALK, ASIST, and suicideTALK are hard to come by.

esuicideTALK is a one to two hour web-based exploration of the suicideTALK program that is intended for individuals who want to start

learning about suicide prevention. Information about the nearest crisis hotline is displayed during the training.

Research and Development

LivingWorks is guided by a social Research and Development method that helps translate knowledge about suicide prevention into fully evolved programs capable of widespread dissemination. The programs incorporate the current literature on suicide prevention, and also

reflect ongoing guidance and feedback from training participants and other stakeholders.

Through this research and development, along with knowledgeable and passionate trainers, LivingWorks has become a premier suicide intervention training organization. Their work helps people become empowered about suicide intervention.



For more information on resources or programs from LivingWorks Education, visit <http://www.livingworks.net>, or contact Jerry Swanner, Executive Director at jerry.swanner@livingworks.net or (910) 867-8822.

If you are interested in any of LivingWorks Education’s trainings, contact:

Contra Costa Crisis Center Trainer Coordinator: Kathleen Snyder, kathleens@crisis-center.org or (925) 939-1916 x147.

Didi Hirsch Trainer Coordinator: Gina Found, gfound@didihirsch.org or (310) 895-2329.

WellSpace Health Trainer Coordinator: Christina Hodkin, chodkin@wellspacehealth.org or (916) 737-5554.