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CaMHSA Program Partner Spotlight

Regional Suicide Prevention Capacity Building Programs and Services

Institute on Aging, WellSpace Health, and Kings View Behavioral Health System

Suicide is the tenth leading cause of death in the United States. The impact of death by suicide is felt by an estimated 4.73 million Americans, who are survivors of the suicide of a friend, family member, or loved one.

Thanks to the Mental Health Services Act, California has made a significant investment in programs that prevent mental illness and connect individuals with help before they reach a crisis point by implementing comprehensive suicide prevention programs that empower everyone, from youth to seniors, with the tools, resources, and crisis support needed to prevent suicide. Because of California's multi-faceted prevention efforts, the rate of suicide in the state is lower than most states.

California Mental Health Services Authority's (CaMHSA) Suicide Prevention programs are expanding the availability of crisis resources and linking people to help by improving knowledge about suicide prevention, early warning signs, and the availability of resources. The programs complement CaMHSA's Stigma and Discrimination Reduction programs by ensuring Californians know that suicide is preventable and are empowered to save lives.

The Institute on Aging, along with their partner WellSpace Health, and Kings View Behavioral Health System (Kings View) are examples of program partners building California's crisis support capacity.

Institute on Aging, partnering with WellSpace Health

Contrary to common belief, the prevalence of depression increases with age. In 2008, the proportion of people age 65+ with clinically relevant symptoms was higher for those 85 and older (18 percent) than for people in younger age groups (12 to 15 percent).¹ The Institute on Aging's partnership with CaMHSA allows this senior-focused organization, the only accredited crisis intervention program in California targeting older adults, to augment and strengthen their elder services.

According to Director and Founder of Elderly Suicide Prevention & Grief Related Services at the Institute on Aging, Patrick Arbore, reducing suicide in the elder population can be especially

¹ Aging in America: Depression and Suicide. *Institute on Aging*. Retrieved August 29, 2013.
<http://www.ioaging.org/about/aging-in-america#depression>



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challenging due to ageist attitudes, misperceptions about the common drivers of older adult suicide, and scarce funding.

As one of the first and only organizations to focus specifically on preventing elder suicide, the Institute on Aging, founded in 1973, enhances the quality of life for adults as they age by enabling them to maintain their health, well-being, independence, and participation in the community.

Friendship Line is a Supportive Connection for Seniors

Mrs. X, an 80 year old woman, lives in a rural county. Her husband died several months ago, and she hasn't lived alone in over 50 years. She feels "out of sorts, restless since my husband died." Her adult children live in different states, but have asked her to live with them. She has declined. "I don't think I could adjust to living with my son or daughter. They have children of their own. I don't want to be a burden." She calls the Friendship Line when she feels a little "blue." She appreciates the opportunity to call when she chooses to do so. The calls "pick me up a bit."

Mr. Y is in his late 70s and resides in a rural county. He is fiercely independent and has been living alone since he and his wife separated many years ago. Mr. Y has recently been having some memory problems. He welcomes the regular calls from the Friendship Line staff and volunteers. He has said, "I am grateful for the calls. They help me get my day started on a good foot." If Mr. Y does not answer the phone, the Friendship Line has an emergency contact person to check on him. Thus far, fortunately, this has not been necessary. Through the calls, Friendship Line volunteers help Mr. Y manage his memory concerns. He feels less alone as a result of the Friendship Line's calls.

Friendship Line

The Friendship Line is both an accredited crisis intervention center and a "warm" line for routine—even daily—phone calls that provide emotional support, medication reminders, and well-being check-ins.

Many older adults experience extreme loneliness and hopelessness that may cause them to consider suicide. For those living in rural areas, the isolation can be even worse. The Friendship Line's support lets elderly Californians know they are not alone and someone is available to listen. Social workers, health care workers, and area aging staff all make referrals to the Institute on Aging when they become aware of individuals who may need a call or offer of support.

Outreach Efforts

With CalMHSA's support, the Institute on Aging has been able to expand outreach efforts and conduct trainings in partnership

with counties and recently hired a bi-lingual crisis line staffer. Additional staffing is provided by volunteers, many of whom are retired nurses and social workers, who are invaluable resources given that older callers may feel more comfortable talking to someone in their peer group.

The Institute on Aging's Friendship Line is dedicated to the San Francisco Bay Area and many Superior and Central California counties, but receives calls from a majority of the 58 California counties, as well as calls from around the United States. The line has never gone unanswered



since 1973, and in 2012, thanks to CaIMHSA's support, the Institute on Aging's staff and volunteers made 36,000 outgoing check-in calls.

WellSpace Health – Suicide Prevention & Crisis Services

In order to serve Californians across the lifespan, the Institute on Aging partners with WellSpace Health, a nationally accredited (AAS) Suicide Prevention Crisis Center. WellSpace Health's Suicide Prevention & Crisis Services staff and volunteers respond to Suicide Prevention Crisis Lines that have served 36 counties in Northern California for over 45 years. Nearly 30,000 Suicide Prevention Crisis Line calls are answered 24 hours a day, 365 days a year from those living within the 916, 209, 530, and 707 area codes. The Suicide Prevention Crisis Lines receives

The Friendship Line can be reached by calling:
1 (800) 971-0016

If you are interested in the Friendship Line's outreach telephone service, please call Institute on Aging Connect at **(415) 750-4111**.

WellSpace Health's **Suicide Prevention & Crisis Services** can be reached by calling:

1 (800) 273-8255 or (916) 368-3111

For **Crisis Chat** go to:

www.suicideprevention.wellspacehealth.org

For **Crisis Text**: Text the word **HOPE** to **(916) 668-iCAN (4226)**.

**normal texting charges from your cell provider may apply.*

If you are interested in learning more about WellSpace Health's wide variety of suicide prevention services and educational outreach, call **(916) 368-3118**.

calls from people of all ages who are in emotional distress, anyone experiencing suicidal thoughts, those who have experienced suicide loss, and third party callers trying to help someone else in suicidal crisis- as well as those who just need to talk. The hotlines also offer outgoing Follow Up calls to anyone in suicidal crisis and those who have recently attempted suicide.

The hotline has expanded capacity with additional Spanish speaking crisis workers to better serve Californians, in addition to other bilingual staff. WellSpace Health also provides Crisis Texting and Crisis Chat Instant Messaging to their extensive suicide prevention services in order to reach both youth and adults in the region who prefer to make contact through chat or text, or would not otherwise contact the crisis hotline. Educational outreach is also provided throughout the region.

For more information on the Institute on Aging's or WellSpace Health's resources or programs, visit <http://www.ioaging.org/>, or <http://www.wellspacehealth.org>, or contact Patrick Arbore, Director and Founder, Elderly Suicide Prevention & Grief Related Services at the Institute on Aging, at parbore@ioaging.org, and Liseanne Wick, Program Manager at Suicide Prevention & Crisis Services, a program of WellSpace Health, at lwick@wellspacehealth.org.



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Kings View Behavioral Health System is a non-profit 501(c)3 health care provider committed to providing services that are characterized by "care and compassion" for individuals needing care. Founded by the Mennonite community in 1951 in Reedley, California, Kings View first operated as a hospital but now offers an array of community behavioral health and substance abuse recovery services.

Immediate support is available to Central Valley residents, both individuals in crisis and family and friends concerned about a loved one. The hotline serves the southern part of the San Joaquin Valley.

To reach the hotline, call:

1 (888) 506-5991

Central Valley Suicide Prevention Hotline

King View's primary goal as a partner with CaIMHSA is to establish and operate the Central Valley's first, live 24-hours a day, 365 days a year, Suicide Prevention Hotline. Through their work, Kings View meets the need for a local, centralized resource to meet the crisis needs of Central Valley residents.

The Central Valley Suicide Prevention Hotline (CVSPH) first opened in January 2013 and operated 12 hours a day, five days a week, serving the southern part of the San Joaquin Valley.

Central Valley Hotline Helps a Mom in Crisis

The mother called the Central Valley Suicide Prevention Hotline one evening, saying she was having thoughts of suicide. She stated that she had spent five years trying to get into the medical field with a job that would enable her to take care of her children. After an interview for a job that meant so much to her, she was very emotional and wanted to give up.

The mother called the hotline her "lifeline." At the time she called the hotline she was at the lowest point in her life and said had never felt that way before. The mother said the responder encouraged her and gave her hope, and seemed to really care about what she was going through. The mother said the follow-up calls from the responder checking on her to see how she was doing and taking the time to talk with her made such a difference. "Here is a stranger willing to reach out and help me through the roughest time in my life."

The mother called back afterwards very excited to tell the staff that she got the job!

The CVSPH has since increased its operating hours with crisis workers and trained volunteers now available around the clock. Immediate support is available to Central Valley residents, both individuals in crisis, and family and friends seeking help for a loved one, 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

The CVSPH has received 3,600 calls since opening in January, with 1,000 calls in July alone.

Since increasing the hotline's hours, Kings View is focusing on building up their volunteer base and staff and pursuing accreditation through the American Association of Suicidology.

A strong and passionate cohort of staff and volunteers has enabled the CVSPH to serve callers in crisis. Advertising through the Know the Signs campaign, performing local outreach to



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underserved communities, and partnering with the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline, as well as local college campuses, has served the dual goals of informing the community about hotline resources and opportunities to volunteer.

For more information on Kings View Behavioral Health System’s resources or programs, visit <http://www.kingsview.org/>, or contact Jeff Gorski, Director of Business Development, at jgorski@kingsview.org.

Resources

California has a number of suicide prevention resources, including these and other crisis centers, which can be reached by contacting the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1 (800) 273-TALK (8255).

For more information on the suicide prevention efforts underway in California and/or to get involved, visit www.suicideispreventable.org, www.elsuicidiodoespreventable.org, and www.yourvoicecounts.org.