

Aspiring to a Zero Suicide Mindset at Work: Developing National Guidelines

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Session Objectives

At the end of this presentation, participants will be able to:

1. Create a plan to bring together diverse stakeholders in a collaborative public-private mode
2. Describe data and resources to advance the cause of workplace suicide prevention
3. Utilize recommendations for easily deployed tools, trainings and resources for short-term action inside of long-term system-wide change



Session Outline

Overview and justification
Mission, vision, and intended audience
Exploratory analysis and results
Proposed solutions
Development and implementation



"The workplace is the last crucible of sustained human contact for many of the 30,000 people who kill themselves each year in the United States. A co-worker's suicide has a deep, disturbing impact on work mates. For managers, such tragedies pose challenges no one covered in management school."*

Sue Shellenbarger (2001)

Impact of Colleague's Suicide Is Strongly Felt in Workplace, *Wall Street Journal*

*In 2017, 47,173 people died by suicide



Overview

Project Origins

2010 → National Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention established the nation's first Workplace Task Force

2016 → CDC's reports on suicide rates by industry

2017 to 2019 → Workplace Task Force enrolled partners and forged core partnership with United Suicide Survivors International and the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention



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Justification

Why should workplaces care about suicide prevention?

- Work as a social structure and its relationship to suicide
- The cost of suicide and suicidal behavior on workplaces
- Suicide waves in industries and the impact on companies
- Job strain and suicide
- Workplace fatalities



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Mission

To change the culture of workplaces, to reduce job strain and negative, fear-based, prejudicial and discriminatory thoughts, behaviors and systems regarding suicide and mental health while at the same time promoting psychologically healthy norms and environments.

The overarching goals of the best practices are twofold:

- To engage employer/professional association leadership to address suicide prevention in a comprehensive way.
- To provide a roadmap to workplace leaders who wish to engage in this culture-change process.



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Vision

We envision a world where workplaces and professional associations join in the global effort to aspire to zero suicides by sustaining a comprehensive suicide prevention strategy as part of their health and safety priorities.



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Vision

We seek to achieve our vision by developing a set of guidelines that:

- Give employers and professional associations an opportunity to pledge to engage in the effort of suicide prevention.
- Demonstrate an implementation structure for workplace best practices in a comprehensive approach.
- Provide data and resources to advance the cause of workplace suicide prevention.
- Bring together diverse stakeholders in a collaborative public-private model.
- Make recommendations for easily deployed tools, trainings and resources for short-term action inside of long-term system-wide change.



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Intended Audience

- Leadership:** Employer/professional association/labor leadership and internal change agents who are inspired to promote this process.
- Implementors:** HR, management, safety, wellness, legal professionals and others tasked with implementing this process.
- Collaborators:** Community partners who will partner on the process.
- Investors:** Investors who will contribute resources to the development and sustainability of this process.
- Evaluators:** Researchers who will assess the effectiveness of workplace suicide prevention.
- Peers:** Co-workers, friends and family who want to help.



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Why an Exploratory analysis?

- Gain buy-in by listening to the needs of various different stakeholders.
- Better understand the resources that already exist to support workplace suicide prevention.
- Identify champions and storytellers who can share lived experience stories of suicide grief as well as stories of living through a suicide crisis of their own, a coworker or family member.
- Gather baseline data against which we can benchmark future change.
- Develop a comprehensive strategy and identify best practices (upstream, midstream, downstream) for workplace suicide prevention.
- Identify tactics that will help engage workplaces and professional associations to move along a stage-of-change model as they integrate these best practices into their health and safety culture.



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Data Gathering Approaches

13 Focus Groups	Employee Assistance Programs, Human Resources, Construction, First Responders, Legal and Employment Law, Workplace Violence, Individuals with Lived Experience, Peer Support, Safety, and Wellness.
15 In-Depth Interviews	Executive Leaders from International Workplace Safety, Healthcare, Risk Management, and Finance, Industry Hygiene Leaders, Judge, Healthcare Insurance (Strategies Director), Labor Health Fund Director, Occupational Health Sciences Researcher, Chief Medical Officer national crisis services, Integrated Leaves and Accommodations Manager, Venture Capitalist (technology), President entertainment industry association, Lawyers in member assistance programs
National Survey	16-item national survey distributed through Task Force member networks and social media from July to August, 2018.

Results – Workplace Readiness

Motivations

- 86% Increase employee health and well-being
- 72% Right thing to do
- 56% Prevent workplace homicide-suicide
- 55% Increase employee safety and productivity
- 43% Improve employee engagement and retention
- 30% Decrease presenteeism and absenteeism



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Results – Workplace Readiness

Barriers

- 47% Getting leaders to buy-in
- 39% Lack of funding
- 30% Time
- 19% Rather focus on mental wellness and resilience
- 18% Branding concerns – not wanting to be labeled as having a "suicide problem"
- 12% Unsure of a need for suicide prevention
- 10% View suicide prevention as a personal/individual matter



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8 Guiding Principles

 Strategic Integration	 Comprehensive & Sustained Investment	 Harm Reduction	 Culture Cultivation
 Dignity Protection	 Wellbeing Promotion	 Empowered Connection	 Action Orientation

9 Practices to Make Suicide Prevention a Health and Safety Priority



Upstream Solutions

- Recruitment, On-Boarding & Work Transitions
- Sense of Purpose and Belonging
- Suicide Prevention Literacy
- Recognize and Reward Resilience, Recovery and Compassion
- Wellness Fairs and Safety Milestone Celebrations
- Connect the Dots among Health Concerns Like Sleep, Pain and Addiction



Midstream Solutions

- Building Out Safety Net (or Pyramid)
- Annual Multi-Component Suicide-Specific Training Program
- Build a Support Network: Power of Peers
- Communication — Baked In to Health and Safety Culture
- Screening
- Navigate the Perceived Legal Barriers, Workers Compensation, Disability Rights and Performance Standards



Downstream Solutions

Evaluate and Promote Mental Health Benefits and Local Services
Protocol Needed for Suicide Crises



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Make suicide prevention a health
and safety priority.



Be part of the solution.

Pledge today at workplacesuicideprevention.com



Questions?

www.workplacesuicideprevention.com

Stay Connected

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