



People are dying for suicide first aid

Suicide affects us all. It's an international problem. For example, more than 3,500 Canadians and 30,000 Americans kill themselves each year. Research studies in Canada and the United States show four to five percent of the population have attempted suicide during their lifetime. One in nine persons has seriously considered suicide.

Anyone can be at risk. Men and women of all ages, of all occupations and all socioeconomic groups are at risk. There is no guarantee of safety from suicide. The key to suicide prevention is trained caregivers who are ready, willing and able to get involved with each individual at risk—caregivers who can recognize individuals who are at risk and who know how to intervene to prevent the risk of suicidal thoughts becoming suicidal behaviors.

What are the costs?

How do you put financial value on the loss of a life? One economic study in the United States, showed each youth suicide resulted in an average loss of 53 years of life and \$432,000 of economic productivity—that total adds up to a staggering 262,000 lost years and \$3.19 billion each year. In Canada, 12% of hospital critical-care and 2% of insurance pay-outs are suicide related. But the economic and health costs pale alongside the emotional costs of suicide. A lost spouse, son, daughter, friend or co-worker can't be replaced. And as those who have experienced such loss understand—it's the emotional costs which demand our involvement in preventing suicide.

Something can be done

The vast majority of those thinking about suicide will find some way to signal their intent. Most suicidal people are looking for another option. They don't want to die. But preventing suicide takes two people—a helper and the person at risk.

United Nations' guidelines and national strategies in Australia, England, Finland, Norway, Scotland and the United States emphasize that caregiver competence is a critical component in any large-scale suicide prevention program.

ASIST helps prepare caregivers

ASIST is designed to help all caregivers become more willing, ready and able to help persons at risk. Suicide can be prevented with the help of prepared caregivers.

Just as "CPR" skills make physical first aid possible, training in suicide intervention develops the skills used in suicide first aid. ASIST is a two-day intensive, interactive and practice-dominated course designed to help caregivers recognize risk and learn how to intervene to prevent the immediate risk of suicide.

The workshop is for all caregivers (any person in a position of trust). This includes professionals, paraprofessionals and lay people. It is suitable for mental health professionals, nurses, physicians, pharmacists, teachers, counselors, youth workers, police and correctional staff, school support staff, clergy, and community volunteers.

ASIST has five learning sections:

1. **Preparing:** sets the tone, norms, and expectations of the learning experience.
2. **Connecting:** sensitizes participants to their own attitudes towards suicide. Creates an understanding of the impact which attitudes have on the intervention process.
3. **Understanding:** overviews the intervention needs of a person at risk. It focusses on providing participants with the knowledge and skills to recognize risk and develop safeplans to reduce the risk of suicide.
4. **Assisting:** presents a model for effective suicide intervention. Participants develop their skills through observation and supervised simulation experiences in large and small groups.
5. **Networking:** generates information about resources in the local community. Promotes a commitment by participants to transform local resources into helping networks.

Emphasizing structured small-group discussions and practice, the course uses a 20-page workbook and two award-winning audiovisuals. Participants receive a 152-page *Suicide Intervention Handbook* and a full color, tear-resistant pocket

card featuring intervention, and risk review and safeplan development principles. They serve as living refreshers of the workshop learning.

ASIST is designed to help all caregivers become more ready, willing and able to help persons at risk. Prepared caregivers can help prevent suicide.

Unprepared caregivers tend to deny, avoid, even stigmatize and punish persons at risk. That is what society has traditionally done. All evidence indicates that unprepared caregivers continue this dangerous tradition. Training is required to turn denial, avoidance and stigmatization into vigilance, understanding and help.

Learn suicide first aid

Join over 750,000 caregivers and participate in LivingWorks' ASIST workshop. Learn to recognize and estimate risk, and become more effective at helping people at risk. The benefits will live on.

Sponsor a workshop

See the benefits first hand. Sponsors and organizers of ASIST receive a complete *Organizer Guide*. Helping to train the caregivers in your organization or community could save a life. It's an investment in people that will continue to grow. See our website for more information about sponsoring a workshop.

LivingWorks and suicide-safer communities

LivingWorks has been helping communities become suicide-safer since 1983. Our programs are an important part of national and regional prevention strategies worldwide. Comprehensive, layered and integrated, LivingWorks' programs prepare community helpers to intervene and prevent suicide. These learning experiences are interactive, easy to learn and practical.

Contact LivingWorks for more information. It is likely that there are ASIST trainers in your area. If not, find out how to organize an *ASIST Training for Trainers (T4T)* course from our website. This course prepares local trainers to present ASIST and build community skills.

Nothing is likely to change unless you help change it. You took the time to read this. You know something others don't. Act on your knowledge.