



Planning for Suicide Prevention, Intervention, and Postvention

Sarah Armstrong, Victoria Bice, Elizabeth Cranford, Thom Field, Brittany Gibson,
and Ann Tolley Hynes, James Madison University
Virginia Counselors Association, 2013

+ Welcome! ...and Pre-Test





Statistics

Elizabeth Cranford

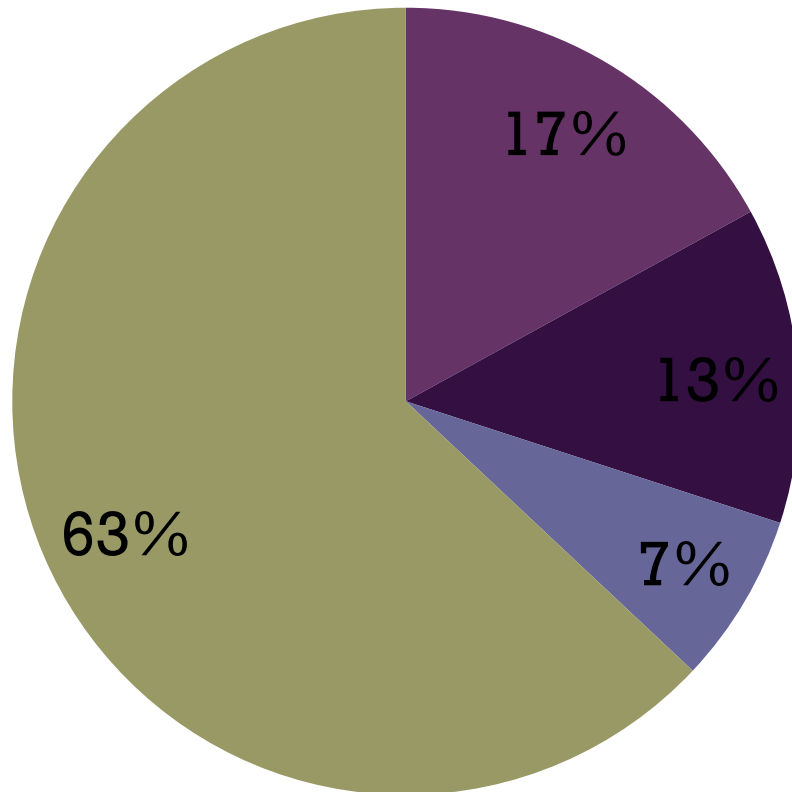
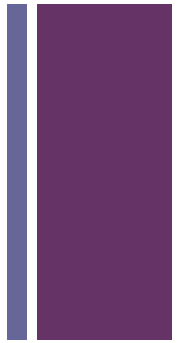


Suicidal Ideation & Behaviors

High School Students grades 9-12

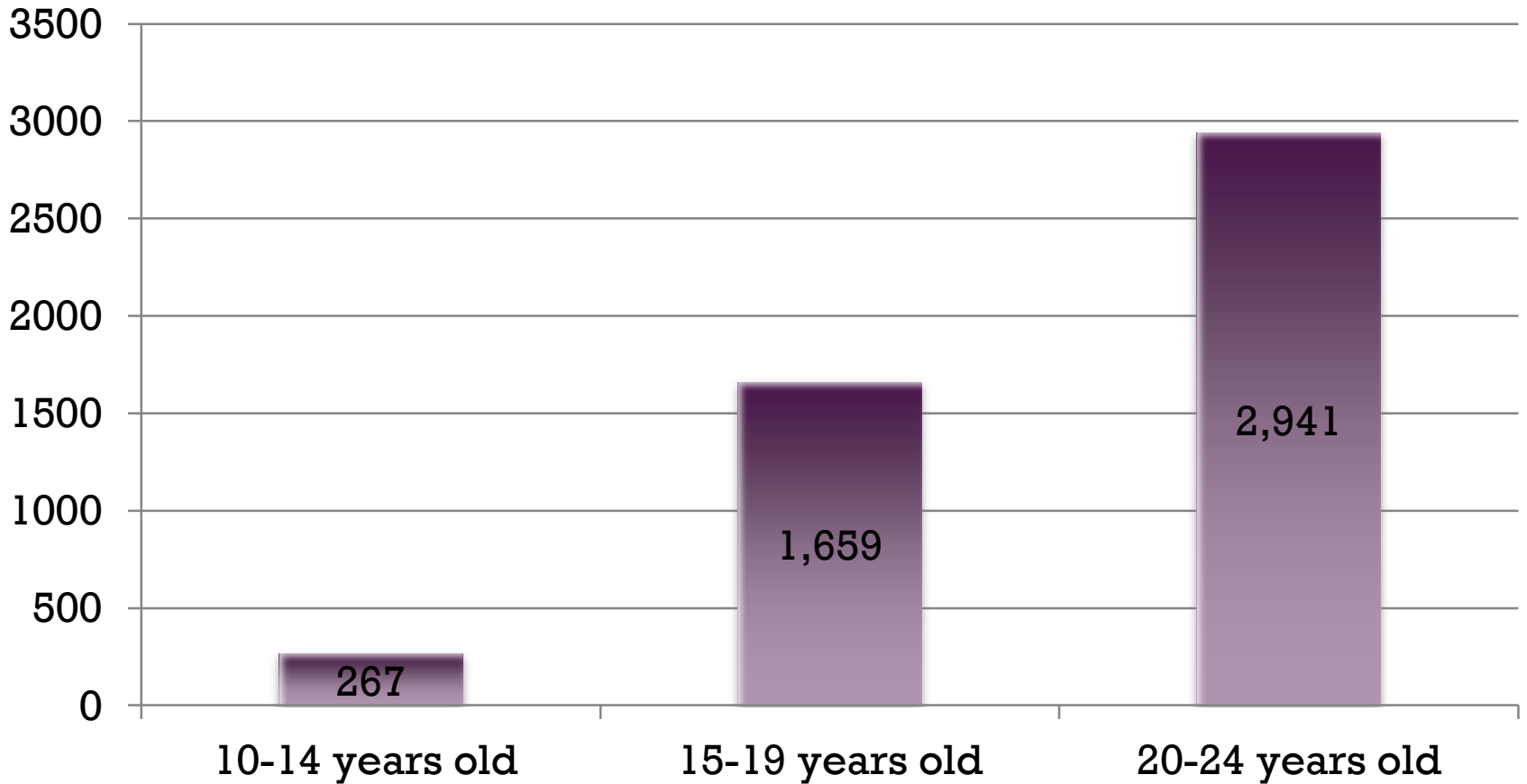
Public & Private Schools

CDC, 2008

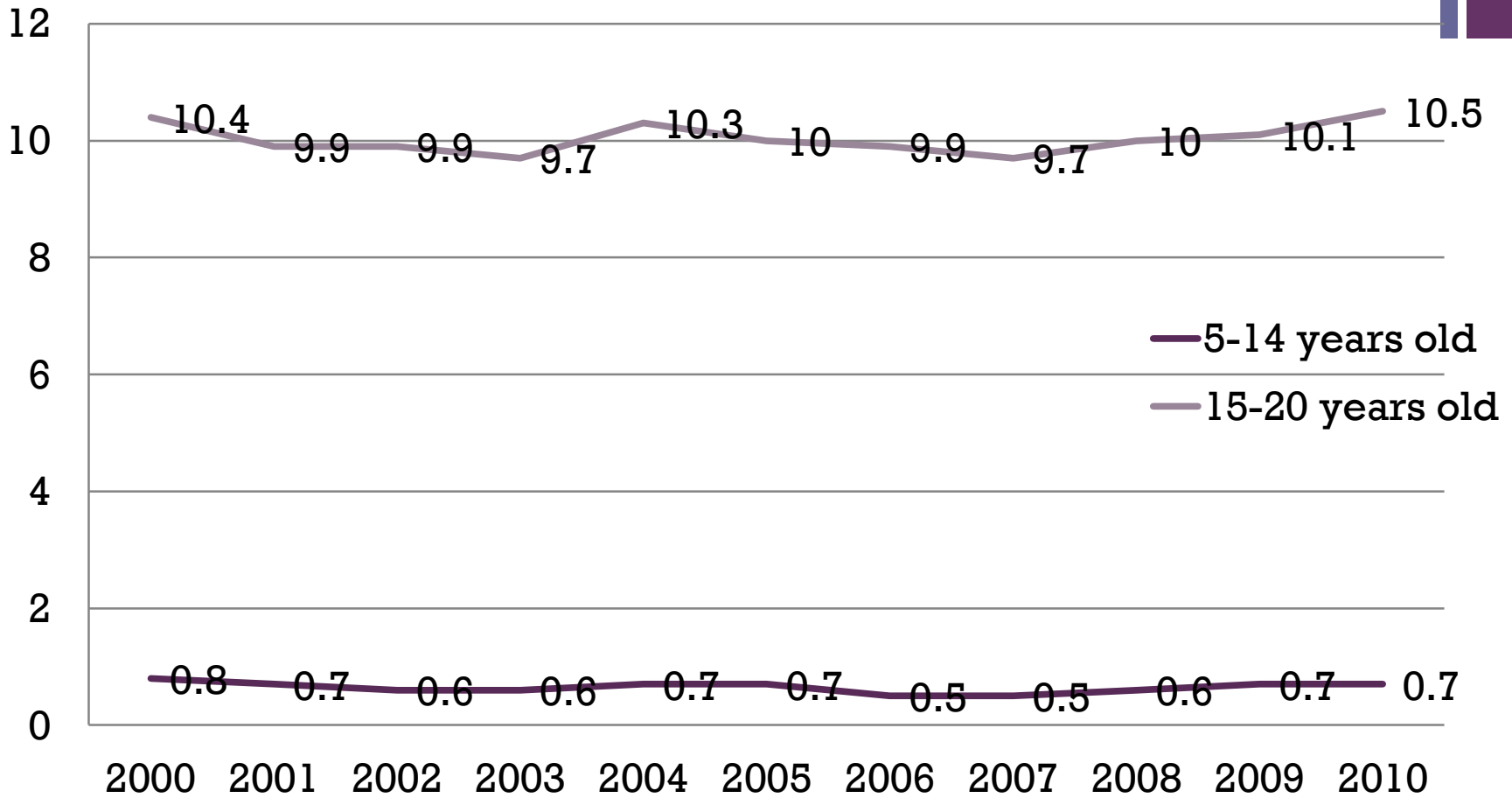


- seriously considered suicide
- created a suicide plan
- attempted suicide
- remaining high school students

+ Suicide by Age in 2010



+ Suicides 2000-2010



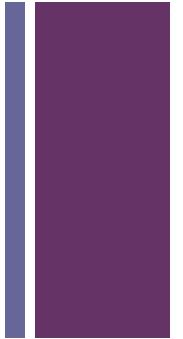
1 person in every 100,000



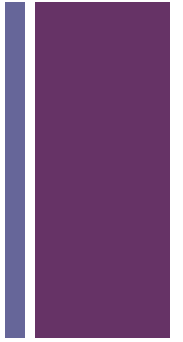
It matters to school counselors!


You...

- Have the potential to intervene
- Know your students well and likely have a long-term understanding of those at risk
- May notice changes in behavior or mood
- Reduce the stigma in mental health
- Provide programs & resources that meet students' personal & social-emotional needs
- Teach students how to get help



+ Activity





+ Prevention Part 1:
Universal Screening

Brittany Gibson and Thom Field

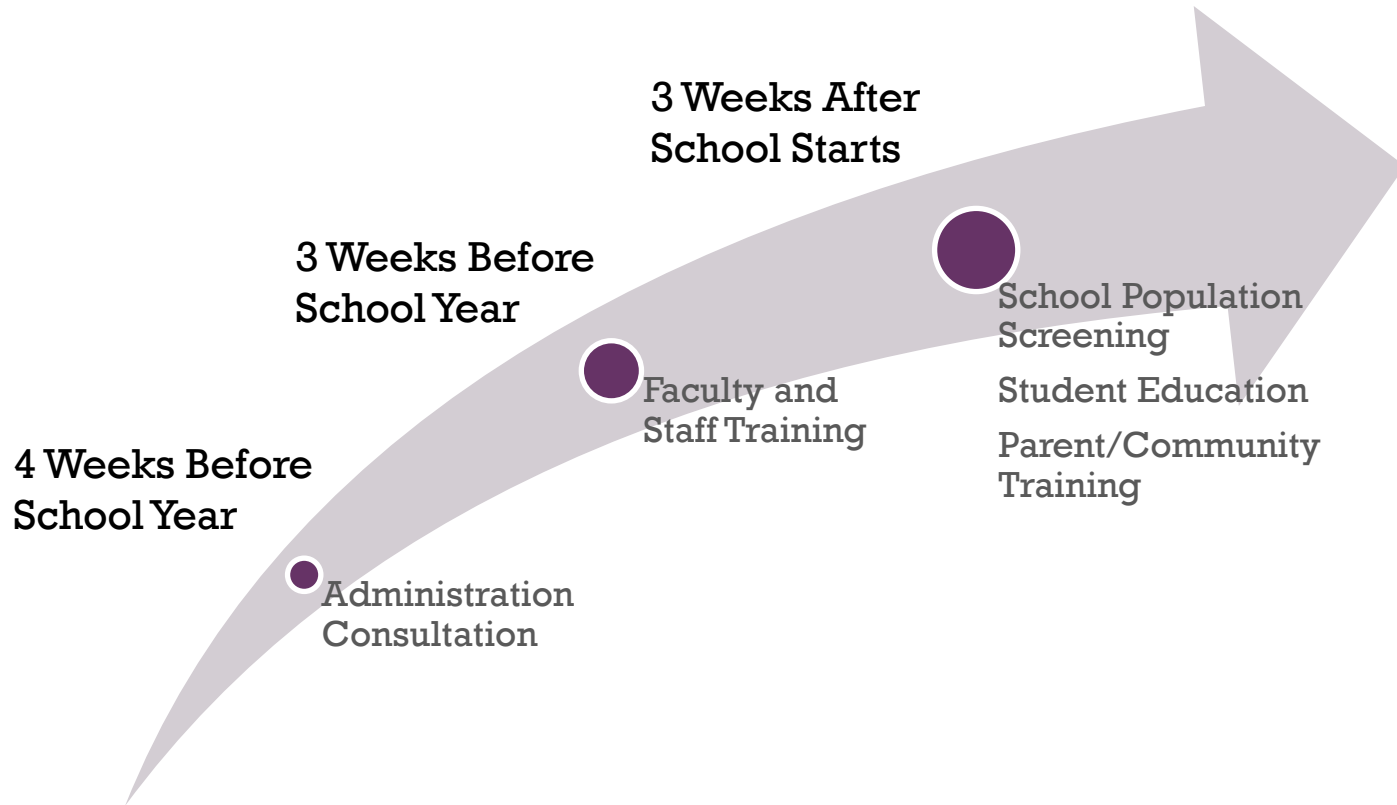
+ Prevention

- First level (school-based prevention program)
- Directed at entire school population.
- Four major prevention activities:
 1. Suicide prevention awareness and education.
 - ✓ Education materials
 2. Training faculty and staff.
 - ✓ Red flag training
 3. Screening programs for suicide concerns.
 - ✓ Sample screening instrument
 4. Crisis Planning.





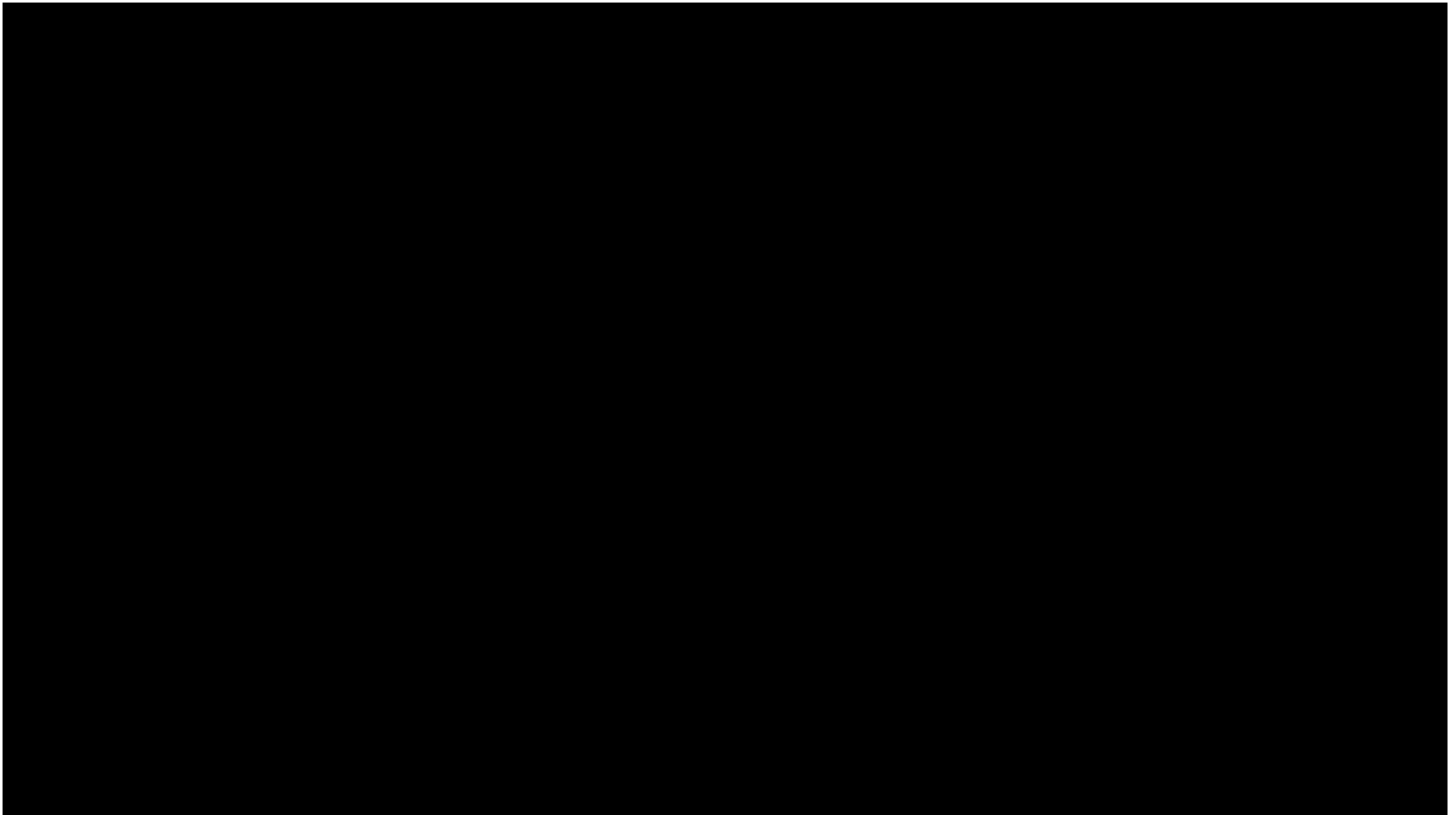
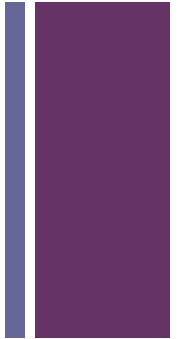
Universal Screening Procedure





1. Suicide prevention awareness and education

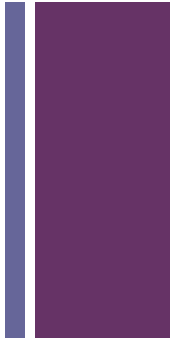
- SOS Friends for Life Video





1. Suicide prevention awareness and education (cont.)

- Help seeking.





1. Suicide prevention awareness and education (cont.)



- Awareness for how to seek help
- Guidance Activity: Role Play



+ 2. Training faculty and staff

- **Red Flag Training**
- Teach warning signs and risk factors.
- Teach ways to help a distressed student.
- ASIST training is a wonderful program to use.
 - ASIST = Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training.



ASIST



2. Training faculty and staff (cont.)



- Conduct a “Gatekeeper training” workshop two weeks before the school year.*
- “Gatekeeper training:” Information about warning signs/risk factors, and outside referral resources.
- For faculty/staff, parents/guardians, and community.



+ 3. Screening programs for suicide concerns

- Used to screen the entire school population.
- Screens for suicide risk and mental health concerns.
- Examples: Lifelines or SOS.



+ 3. Sample screening instruments



- SOS Universal Screening Tool*



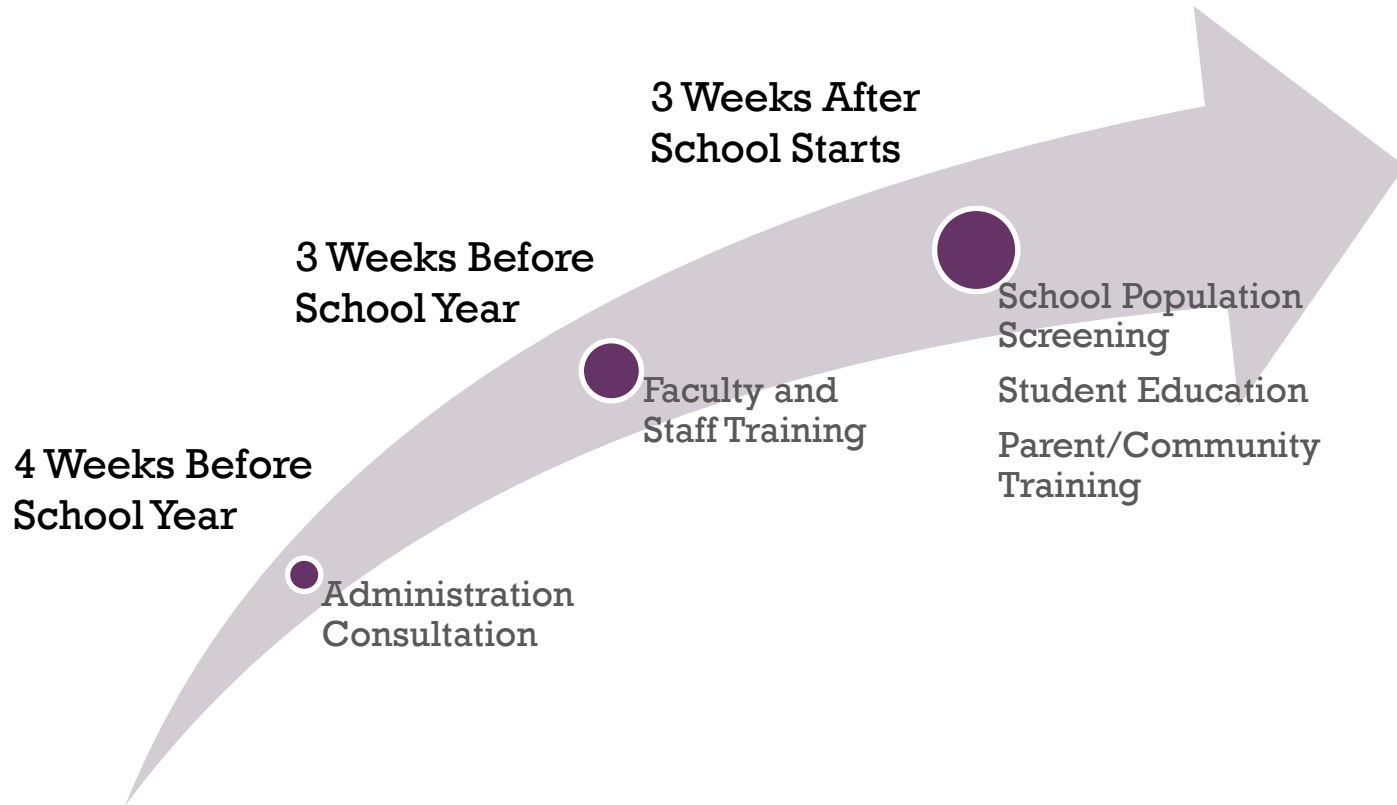
+ 4. Crisis planning

- Have a crisis plan in place before the school year.
- Ethics discussion: What possible ethical dilemma could occur if a school does not have an updated crisis plan?
- Examples of detailed crisis plans for student suicide.





Universal Screening Procedure





What is the importance for Universal Screening in *schools*?



- Natural setting for suicide prevention programs.
- Youth confide in their peers.
- Provides protective factors for at-risk students.
- Raise school support/response against suicide.



Prevention Part 2: Selective Screening

Sarah Armstrong and Thom Field

+ Selective Screening

- Identify at-risk students via universal screening
- Provide services for targeted, high-risk groups.
- Examples include:
 - Students in transition
 - Students experiencing loss
 - Students with poor coping skills
 - Students previously exposed to suicide



+ Why it Works in Schools

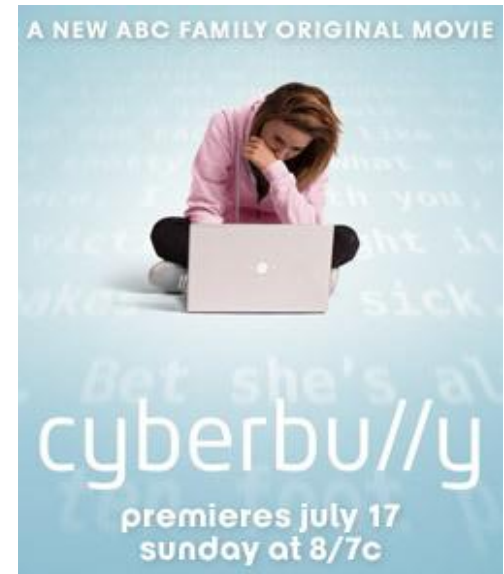
- Recognizing warning signs*
- Can be used as early intervention strategies.
- Increases social and emotional competence which has been linked to improved academic achievement.



+ Use *IS PATH WARM?* to identify warning signs



+ Selective Screening



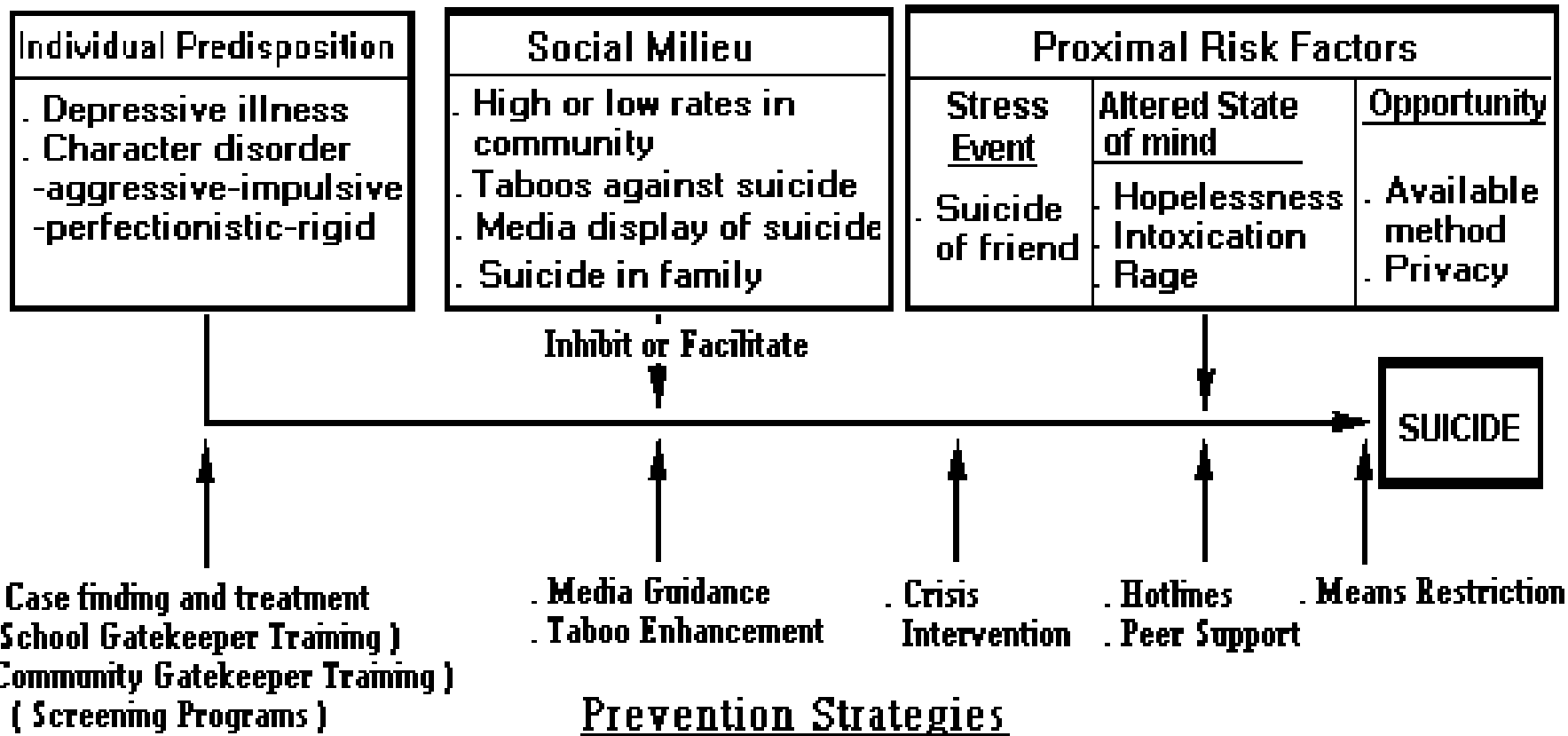
Case Study (Cyberbully)



Intervention Part 1: Immediate Interventions

Sarah Armstrong and Thom Field

**Figure 1,
Conceptual Model of Factors Influencing Youth Suicide**
Causes of Suicide



Adapted, with permission, from the Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry. Shaffer, D., Garland, A., Gould, M., Fisher, P., and Trautman, P. Preventing Teenage Suicide: A Critical Review, 1988, 27:675-687.

+ Immediate Intervention

- When concern about a student occurs:
 - Take **ALL** threats or concerns of suicide seriously
 - Take immediate action – inform school crisis team, if applicable
 - **DO NOT LEAVE STUDENT ALONE OR SEND HOME ALONE**
 - Meet with the student and assess the risk
 - Contact parents/guardian
 - If necessary, contact a local intervention agency or bring student to emergency room
 - Document any actions taken

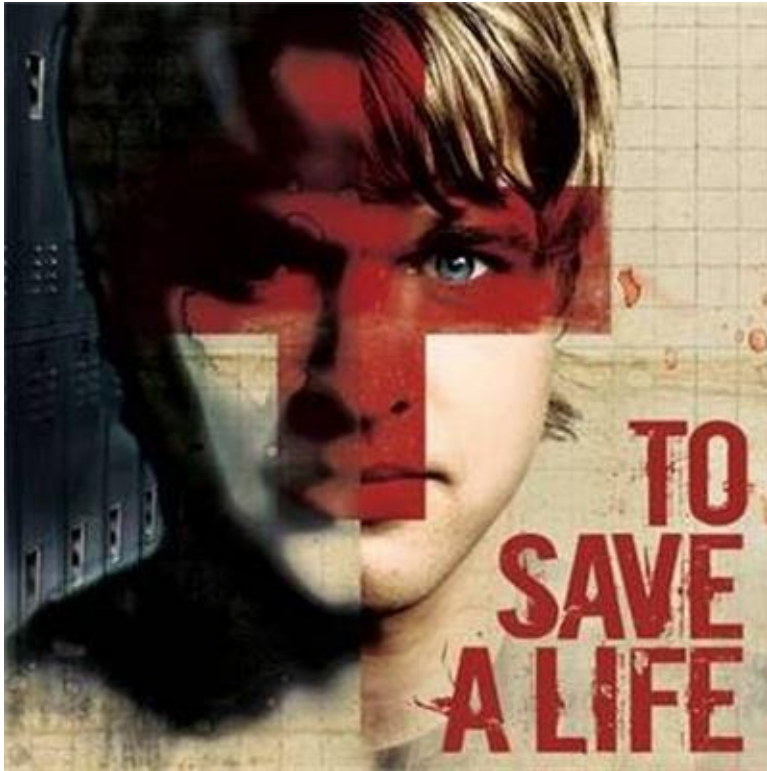


+ Meeting with Student & Crisis Counseling

- 1. Assess Lethality**
- 2. Establish Rapport with Student**
- 3. Listen to the story**
- 4. Manage the Feelings**
- 5. Explore Alternatives**
- 6. Use Behavioral Strategies**
- 7. Follow Up**



+ Individualized Safety Plan*



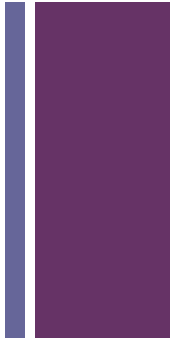
■ Possible Types

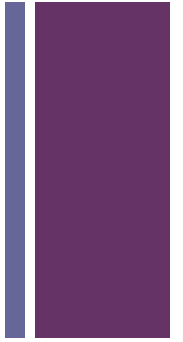
- Safety plan for being at school
- Personal “hope box”

■ Typically include a list of activities or resources that will help the student remain safe

- “Where to go if feeling unsafe”
- “Who to talk to”
- “What to do when feeling sad”

+ Guided Practice: Behavioral Contract*





BREAK 😊



Intervention Part 2: Ongoing Interventions

Victoria Bice

+ Ongoing Interventions

- Continue contact with the
 - student (check-ins)
 - parents
 - teachers
 - other school employees
- Referrals to community resources
- Request release of information between the school and any outpatient services.



+ Ongoing Interventions

- Continue to keep lethal means out of the student's home or out of reach.
- Continue to document all interactions with the student.
- Manage assignments if the student is hospitalized or absent from school.
- If parents do not intervene when they hear that their child is suicidal, CPS may need to be called. Be attentive to other signs of abuse/neglect.



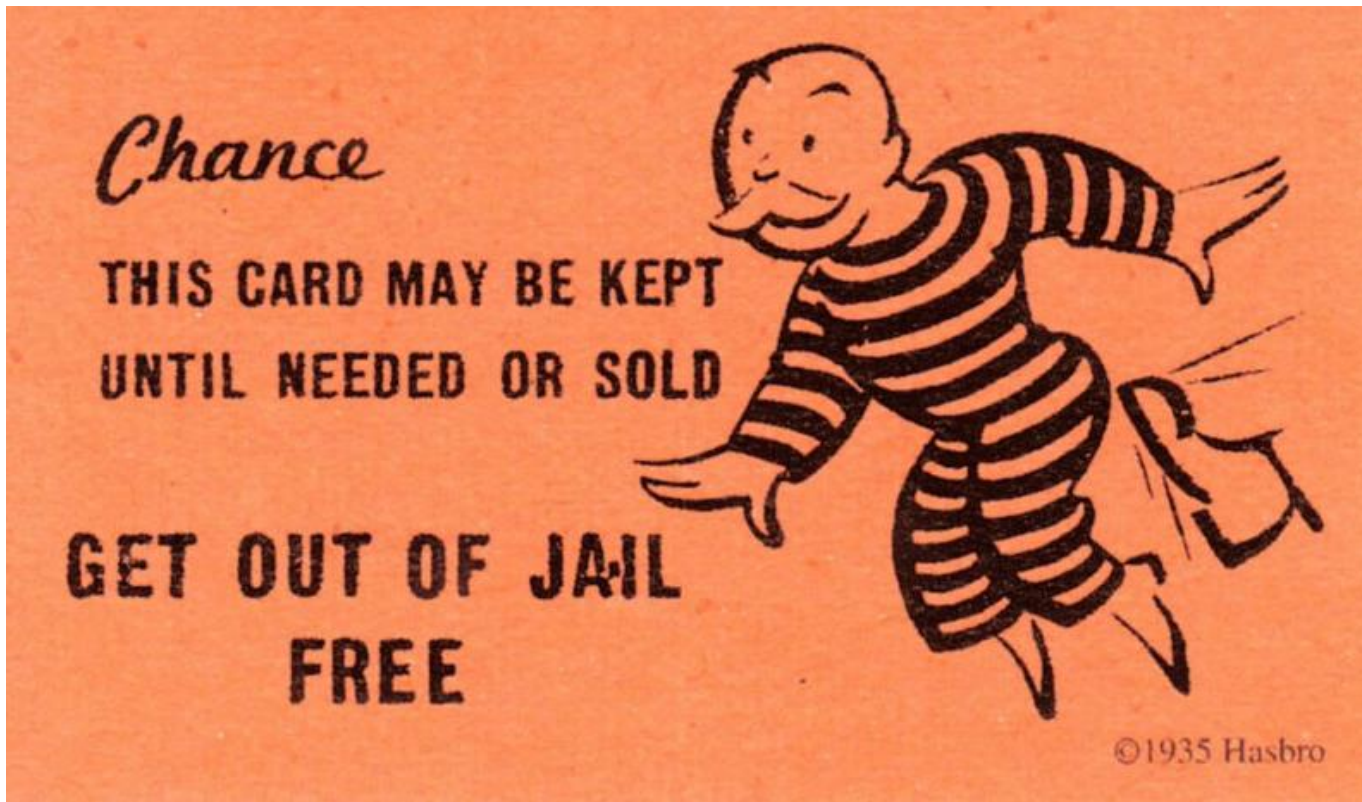
+ Targeted Interventions: Mindfulness Training

- A skill that helps students to...
 - stay immersed in stressful situations without becoming overwhelmed



- focus on their experiences without judging them or equating these experiences to
- facts gain a sense of control over their world.

+ Targeted Interventions: “Get Out of Jail Free” card





Targeted Interventions: Pleasant Activity Scheduling



- **Activity:** Identify 3 or more pleasant activities that you can schedule for the following week. Activities can be added if they are not on the list. *

Pleasant Activities List

It doesn't really matter what you do, just do something! Waiting until you "feel like it" doesn't work, because the inactivity only makes you feel worse, and therefore feel less like doing it.

- Rearrange a room
- Dance
- Help groups you respect
- Go to a park
- Buy a used musical instrument and learn to play
- Give blood
- Lend something
- Enjoy a sauna or jacuzzi
- Buy some watercolors and paint a picture
- Be with friends or relatives
- Join a protest (political, environmental)

+ Targeted Interventions: Adolescent Diary Card*



Dialectical Behavior Therapy Skills Diary Card					Initials		Filled out in session		How often did you fill out this side?			Started:				
					ID #		Y	N	___ Daily	___ 2-3x	Date ___/___/___					
Circle Start Day	Highest Urge To:				Highest Rating For Each Day							Actions				
	Commit Suicide 0-5	Self Harm 0-5	Use TB 0-5	Use TB 0-5	Physical Misery 0-5	Sadness 0-5	Fear 0-5	Shame & Guilt 0-5	Anger 0-5	Joy 0-5	Love 0-5	Self Harm Y/N	Target Behavior Y/N	Target Behavior Y/N	Used Skills* 0-7	Reinforce ✓
Day of Week																
MON																
TUE																
WED																
THU																
FRI																
SAT																
SUN																

+ School Re-Entry Following Hospitalization

1. Contact parents *ASAP* after learning of the crisis.
2. Does your school require a recommendation from a mental health professional before the student can return to school?
3. Talk with student to understand his/her needs upon returning to school.
4. Ask the student who they have told about the hospitalization.
5. Monitor the school climate:
Are rumors being spread?



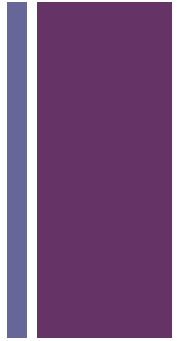
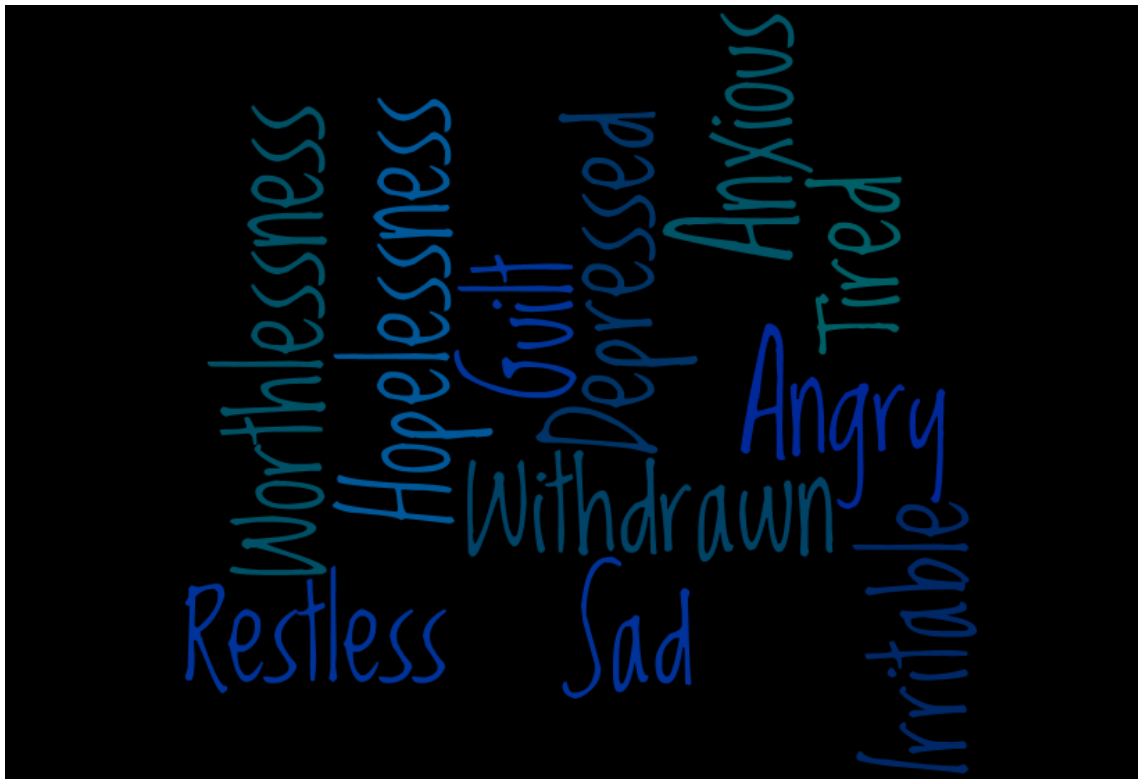
+ School Re-Entry Following Hospitalization

6. Notify classroom teachers on the student's overall progress.
7. Check in with the student each day.
8. Work with family to understand the needs of siblings.
9. Monitor student as long as necessary.



+ Parent Education

- Educate parents/guardians on signs of relapse into suicidal ideation.



+ Parent Education

- Teach parents how to talk with their child about suicidal thoughts
 - How do you want to be treated?
 - How can I check on you?
 - How often should I check on you?
 - How safe do you feel?
 - When do we need to intervene?
 - Learn their triggers or what causes them to feel upset and suicidal.

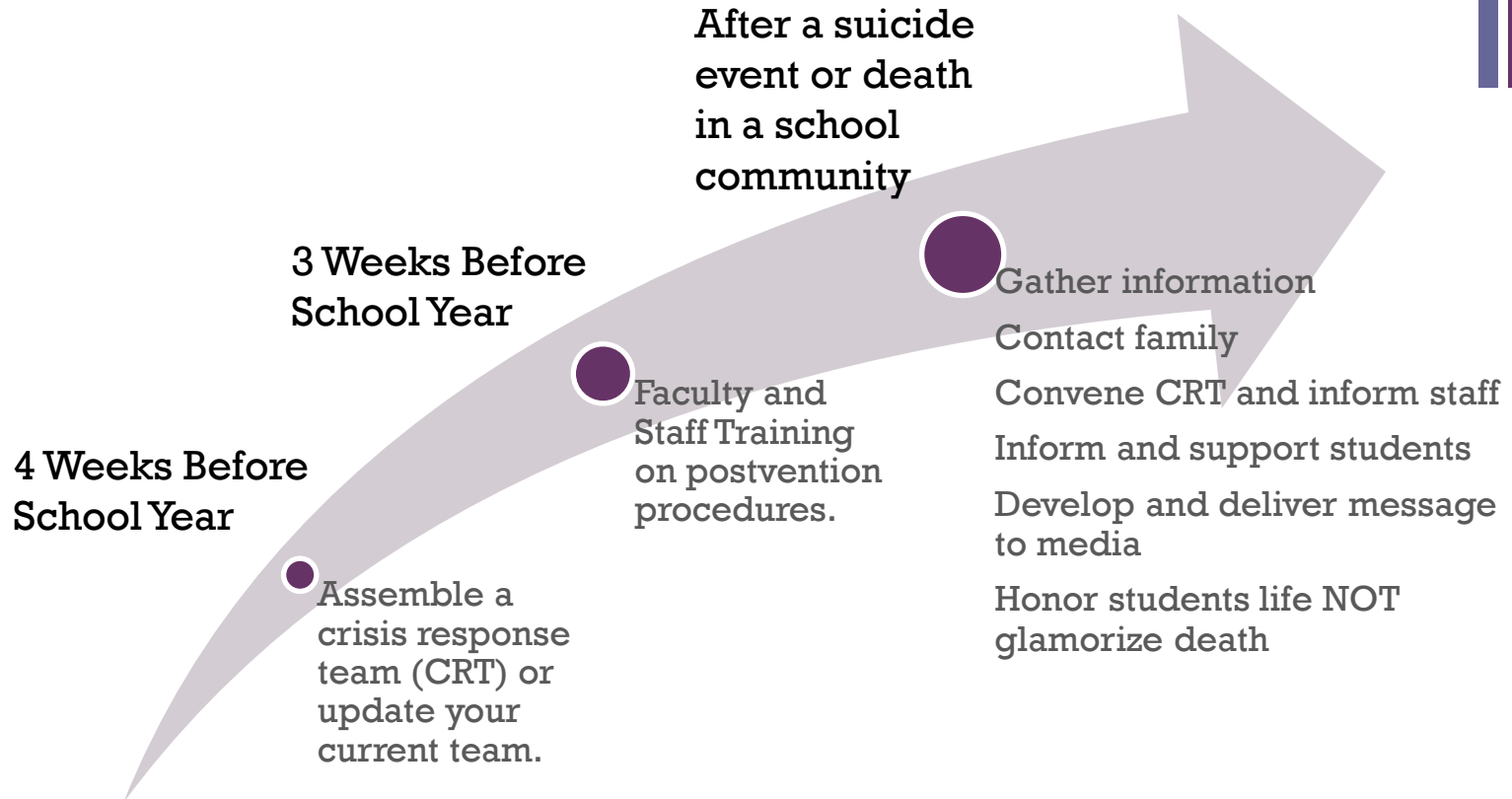




+ Postvention Part 1:
Internal Reponse (School)

Ann Tolley Hynes

+ Postvention Timeline



+ After a Suicide: School-based Response

- Treat all student deaths the same way. Consistency is key!
- Adolescents are at risk for suicide contagion
- Focus on mental health
- Help is available for any student struggling with mental health issues or suicidal feelings.



+ After a Suicide: Helping Students Cope

- Reach out to students in a deliberate and timely fashion
- Wherever possible, small group meetings (homeroom) should:
 - Keep to a time limit
 - Give each student the opportunity to speak
 - Give accurate information regarding suicide
 - Focus on identifying and expressing feelings
 - Discuss practical coping strategies
 - Avoid memorialization



+ Crisis Response Team

- Inform all necessary school officials
- Get the **facts**.
- Assign responsibilities to team members
- Immediately notify faculty and staff
- Schedule an initial all staff meeting as soon as possible
- Death notification for students
- Draft and disseminate a death notification for parents*
- Provide teachers and parents with handouts on facts about suicide and mental disorders *
- Determine whether outside resources such as grief counselors, or crisis responders will be needed



+ Roles and Responsibilities of CRT

■ Safety

- Keep school day as normal as possible (hours, dismissal procedures, media).
- Follow the deceased student's schedule to monitor peer reactions and answer questions.
- Identify students who may be having particular difficulty.

Daily Bell Schedule

Period 1..... 7:30 – 8:20

Period 2..... 8:25 – 9:17
(includes 2 minutes for announcements)

Period 3..... 9:22 – 10:12

Period 4..... 10:17 – 11:07

A Lunch 11:07 – 11:37

Period 5..... 11:40 – 12:30

Period 5..... 11:12 – 12:02

B Lunch 12:02 – 12:32

Period 6..... 12:35 – 1:25

Period 7..... 1:30 – 2:20

+ Roles and Responsibilities of CRT

■ Operations

- Arrange for “floaters,” in case teachers need to take time out of their classrooms.
- Arrange for crisis counseling rooms
- Prepare to track and respond to student and/or family requests for memorialization





Roles and Responsibilities of CRT



■ Community Liaisons

- Primary contact persons for community services

■ Funeral

- Communicate with the funeral director
- Depending on the family's wishes, help disseminate information about the funeral to students, parents and staff
- Encourage parents to accompany their child to the funeral.





Roles and Responsibilities of CRT

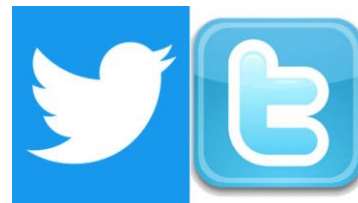


■ Media

- Prepare a media statement
- Designate a media spokesperson
- Advise staff that only the media spokesperson will be authorized to speak to the media
- Advise students to avoid interviews with the media

■ Social Media

- Oversee school's use of social media.
- Encourage students to avoid glamorizing the student's suicide on social networking sites and other social media.





Postvention Part 2: External Response (Community)

Ann Tolley Hynes



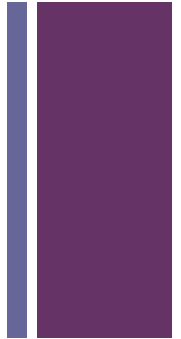
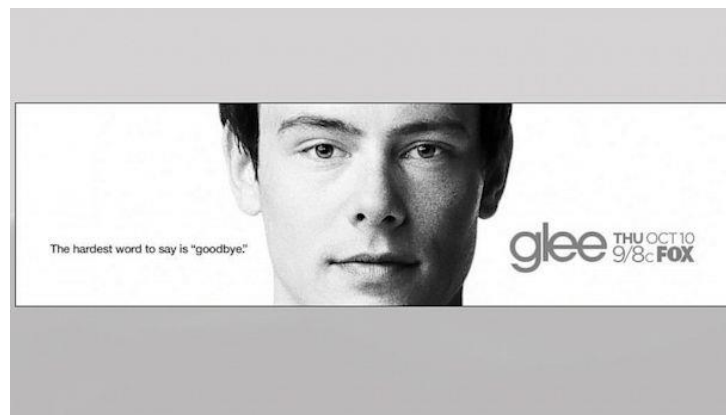
After a Suicide: Appropriate Memorialization



- Very important to treat all deaths the same way
- Creative Suggestions
 - Community service
 - Fundraising (Mental health or suicide prevention)
 - Purchasing books on mental health for the school library
 - Working with the administration to develop a curriculum focused on effective problem-solving
 - Raising funds to help the family manage funeral expenses

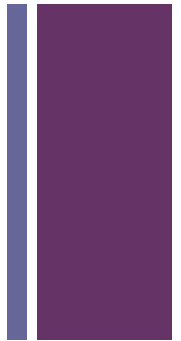
+ Video Depictions

■ 4:15- 5:02



+ Video Depictions

■ 2:50- 3:22





Get the facts and assemble the team!



- Check with the family and police department about details of death
 - No detailed description should be given out to public due to imitation risk
- Meet with Crisis Team to devise a public message from school including facts, such as:
 - Suicide prevention needs in future
 - Warning signs for at-risk youth
 - Statistics to increase suicide awareness
- Media can be used positively for prevention.



School's Mental Health Message to Community through Media Sources



- Media used to spread a message of suicide awareness and educate the community
- Describe suicide as a **choice** affecting others, rather than a destined or unavoidable act
- Focus more on how the suicide affects others, rather than the victim's problems or achievements
- Offer information about effective treatments available at school and in the community





Memorial Activities and Actions



- Be cautious about the school's participation in community memorials because of "contagion" risks with area youth
- Instead of physical memorial, plan a "living memorial" such as a Student Assistance Awareness Fund
- Provide information about private memorial services
- Require parental permission to miss school, no shuttles during school to memorial.





Other Tips and Guidelines for Community Relations



- Stay away from dramatization through detailed descriptions and pictures of those grieving
- Use adults as the survivors in media and not vulnerable youth like friends, teammates, etc.
- Avoid using suicide in heading of news report, offer details in the body of the text
- Choose language carefully...
 - "having died by suicide" NOT "committed suicide"
 - "fatal or non fatal attempts" NOT "successful or unsuccessful"

+ Examples from the News



abc

WENDY RYAN

WRYAN@ABCATIONNEWS.COM

+ Examples from the News

Former Cincinnati Reds player Ryan Freel reportedly commits suicide with self-inflicted shotgun blast

First Coast News first reported the 36-year-old's suicide, then The Florida Times-Union reported Freel was found dead from a self-inflicted shotgun blast.

[Comments \(1\)](#)

BY [LENNY NESLIN](#) / NEW YORK DAILY NEWS

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 23, 2012, 2:23 AM

Former big leaguer Freel dead at 36

By Mark Sheldon / MLB.com | 12/23/12 12:20 AM ET

[Comments \(335\)](#)

[Tweet](#)




+ Examples from the News

Gia Allemand Dead: 'Bachelor' Star Dies At 29 (UPDATE)

The Huffington Post | By Cavan Sieczkowski  

Posted: 08/14/2013 3:18 pm EDT | Updated: 08/14/2013 9:41 pm EDT 

 Recommend

 1,722 people recommend this. Be the first of your friends.



8/14/2013 5:30 PM PDT UPDATED: 8/14/2013 1:44 PM PDT BY TMZ STAFF

GIA ALLEMAND
'Bachelor' Star Dead
**SUICIDE BY
HANGING**

+ Examples from the News



Deaths Ruled Double Suicide

Kaela Wegner and Tony Holt died of self-inflicted gunshot wounds to the head.

<http://www.connectionnewspapers.com>

Parents Mourn a Girl 'Full of Love'

Virginia Family Seeks Answers After Deaths of Teenage Couple

By Karin Brulliard

Washington Post Staff Writer

Friday, January 7, 2005; Page A01



+ Examples from the News



Texas teen who committed suicide at school posted Facebook warning

Adrian Alvarez, a 16-year-old dad to an infant son, appeared despondent in the post and said he was sorry for the pain he was causing. Alvarez fatally shot himself at school Tuesday — an act classmates said they never expected.

[Comments \(28\)](#)

BY [ERIK ORTIZ](#) / NEW YORK DAILY NEWS

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 17, 2013, 8:03 AM

SHARE THIS URL:

Adrian Alvarez Identified as Dead Lanier High School Student

By [Zachary Stieber](#), [Epoch Times](#) | October 15, 2013

Last Updated: October 17, 2013 3:03 pm

Texas Student Kills Himself In Front Of High School Classmates

Published October 17, 2013 / [Fox News Latino](#)



'I'm taking my life away because I'm tired of who I am': Tragic final Facebook post of student, 16, who killed himself in front of his high school class

- Adrian Alvarez committed suicide in a courtyard on the campus of Lanier High School in Austin

By [LOUISE BOYLE](#) and [MICHAEL ZENNIE](#)

PUBLISHED: 01:22 EST, 17 October 2013 | UPDATED: 01:23 EST, 17 October 2013

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk>

+ Helping Kids Cope Together



+ SUMMARY: Key Points

■ Prevention:

- Awareness and education among students and faculty
- Faculty and staff training
- Screening programs
- Crisis planning

■ Intervention:

- Individual interviews
- Safety planning and behavioral contracts
- Family involvement
- Assessment for hospitalization



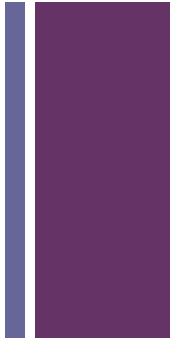
+ SUMMARY: Key Points

■ Ongoing interventions:

- Re-entry meetings if hospitalized
- Student check-ins
- Scheduling pleasant activities
- Diary cards
- Parent education

■ Postvention:

- Follow the school crisis plan, use crisis response team
- Attempt to minimize glamorization (causes contagion effects)
- Encourage service instead of memorials on school grounds



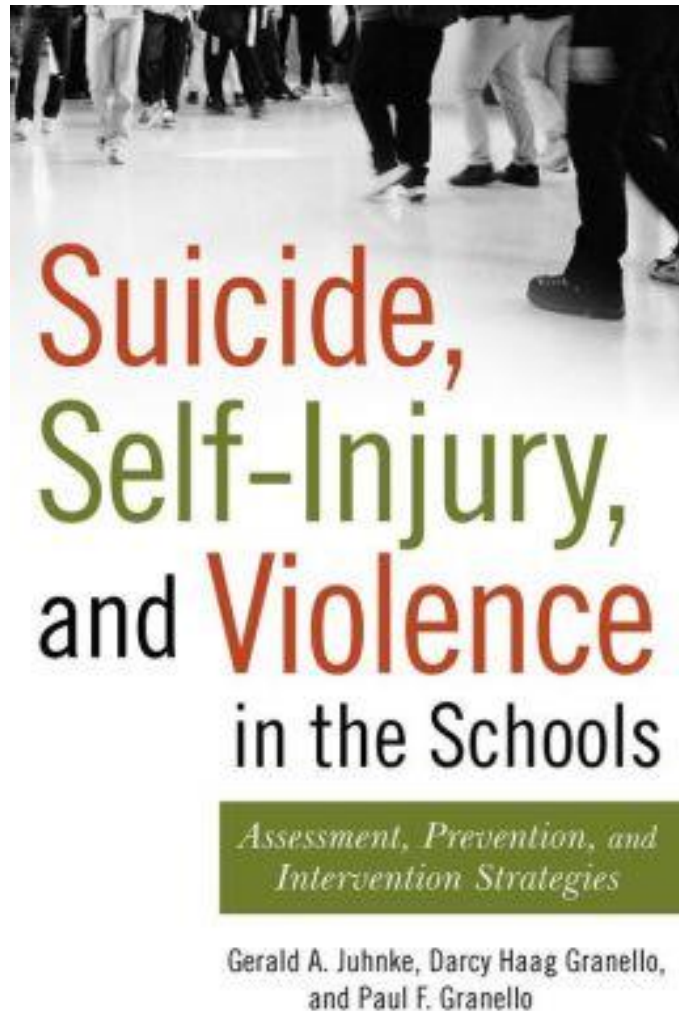
+ SUMMARY: Key Points



■ Postvention, continued

- Attend to internal needs (school staff and students)
- Attend homeroom of student who died by suicide, provide support
- Prepare media statements carefully
- Characterize suicide as a choice rather than an unavoidable act
- Offer support to affected families
- Take care of yourself!

+ For More Information:



+ Handout References



- BSAD Scoring Instructions

http://www.medwayschools.org/highschool/guidance/sos_scoring.pdf

- BSAD Parent Version

<http://www.sturgischarterhschool.com/guidance/documents/SOSParentScreening.pdf>

- SOS Brief Screen for Adolescent Depression (BSAD) Screening Form

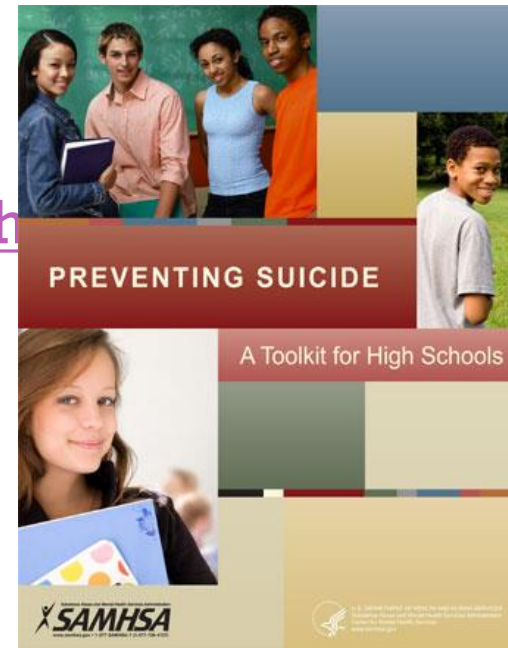
<http://www.canyonisd.net/cms/lib/TX01000615/Centricity/Domain/87/Student%20BSAD%20Screening%20Form.pdf>



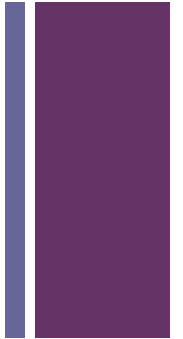
Additional Resources & Training



- Free! Suicide Prevention Online Training
<http://training.sprc.org/>
- Free! Columbia-Suicide Severity Rating Scale (C-SSRS) Training & Assessment
http://cssrs.columbia.edu/training_cssrs.html
- Free! Resources to Distribute on Suicide Prevention <http://store.samhsa.gov/home>
- Suicide Prevention Training: QPR Institute (prices vary)
<http://courses.qprinstitute.com/>



+ Post-Test





References



- Harpel, J.L., West, P., Jaffe, G. Admundson, D. (2011). *After a suicide: A toolkit for schools. American Foundation for Suicide Prevention and Suicide Prevention Resource Center.*
- Juhnke, G. A., Granello, D. H., & Granello, P. F. (2010). *Suicide, self-injury, and violence in the schools: Assessment, prevention, and intervention strategies.* Hoboken, NJ: Wiley.
- *U.S.A. SUICIDE: 2010 OFFICIAL FINAL DATA.* (n.d.). Retrieved April 6, 2013, from http://www.suicidology.org/c/document_library/get_file?folderId=262&name=DLFE-636.pdf