

In 2012, Suicide surpassed car accidents as the leading cause of injury-related deaths in the U.S.

Since the legislature brought the Suicide Prevention Program into existence in 2006, SPAN-GA and many other agencies and organizations have been working together with the Suicide Prevention Program to execute the activities and coordinated efforts for suicide prevention, intervention and aftercare in Georgia. Under the leadership of the Division of Public Health 2006 – 2009 and then the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities (DBHDD) from 2009 - present, we have made great strides toward impacting a very complicated crisis, but we still have much work to do. Beginning with a public health community based approach and adding a mental health approach has allowed us to make headway with this crisis from many perspectives. **Here is a list of some of the exceptional work that has been accomplished** so far, and has yielded many positive outcomes for Georgians!

Highlights of What have we Accomplished:

- **Building Suicide Prevention Coalitions** on a local level bringing awareness, education, resources, support and trainings out into communities across Georgia. Starting at 0, we now have 11 active community coalitions with 4 more communities in the start up planning progress. Some of these coalitions cover multiple counties.
- Broadly training community members, professionals, teachers, parents, pastors and any interested citizens in gatekeeper programs, **QPR (Question, Persuade, Refer) and Mental Health First Aid**.
- Implementing **Suicide Prevention, Help Seeking and Resiliency Building programs** for the middle and high schools.
- Bringing **Intervention and Post-vention programs to schools** to give them a model for building teams within the school and community to help them respond appropriately at the moment of a crisis.
- **Responding to requests for support** from local communities when suicide crises and clusters have emerged.
- Hosting, organizing and executing **three Statewide Stakeholders Conferences** with the last one having more than 400 attendees from all over the state with representation from a broad variety of participants including professionals, survivors, military, aging, faith, LBGT, Hispanic, Asian, veterans, and more. This was a three-day conference with multiple tracks designed to meet the needs of all participants.
- Hosting, organizing and executing **three Statewide College Conferences** to introduce programs and resources, and guide colleges in building teams or task forces to do prevention, intervention and aftercare work on campus to meet the needs of this high risk population.
- Training, assisting and providing ongoing support for peers and professionals in leading **Survivors of Suicide Support Groups**. We have grown from 9 groups to 26 groups in Georgia with 5 more in progress. And as an extension of this work we have been able to offer families that have lost a loved one to suicide – **an annual family grief support camp - Camp SOS**.
- Developed, printed and ongoing distribution of many thousands of **“Purple Packets”** which deliver comfort and resource information to survivors statewide, using the coalitions and support groups around the state as a part of the mass distribution system to funeral directors, hospitals, patients advocates, victims advocates, first responders, and faith community among others, we have distributed thousands of packets to support survivors who themselves have an up to 5 times higher risk of suicide.
- While successfully executing the development of SOS Groups for adults, we were constantly asked, **“but what about our kids”**. So we have held consultative meetings to develop a Georgia Model for **SOS Groups for Children & Teens**, and are ready for our “train the trainer” training in May, with a projected 8-10 pilot Children & Teen SOS groups beginning in the next fiscal year.
- Providing **training for professionals and community members** who work closely with families that have lost loved ones to suicide – improving and increasing community resources.
- Built, maintain and grow a statewide suicide prevention information network, **www.GSPIN.org with a Broadcast Network** to connect all stakeholders: survivors, coalitions, colleges, the prevention community and others to all of the efforts, activities and trainings opportunities around the state.

- **Training for Hospitals** in suicide/suicide attempt discharge protocols.
- Partnering with NAMI GA to train First Responders in **Crisis Intervention Team Training** arming officers and EMS with skills to work with suicide attempters and survivors of suicide loss.
- Training for **psychological autopsies** for coroners and others close to suicide losses.
- **Rolling out CSSRS** (Columbia Suicide Severity Rating Scale) and **Safety Planning** to the provider network statewide.
- Hosted and/or supported **conferences for the Aging Population, Military, Veterans**, and others.

This is just a glimpse at what we have been able to accomplish with limited staff and funding. Because our suicide prevention efforts have been met with such need, as well as passion, energy and interest in communities across Georgia, our work is growing, but the limited resources mean that not all communities have had access to these activities.

Our Suicide Prevention Program has given us the vision of how to accomplish this, now we need more resources for our communities and our state to be ABLE to accomplish this. It is ACHIEVABLE! To reduce the number of highway deaths was a massive undertaking, and to be able to accomplish the same reduction of suicide deaths will take the same level of effort.

To grow capacity so we can meet these needs, to reach all the communities in Georgia, the Suicide Prevention Program desperately needs more resources: more staff and more funding.

This crisis is growing. We are in need of champions to help us find those resources for the program... to save lives in Georgia.

SO, DO YOU KNOW...

...if we are we working in your community with your constituents?

...if they need us to support them?

...we could bring tools required to support the families, the children, the elderly, the schools, churches, professionals, law enforcement, hospitals and each and every community member in your town?

We can do many things to support your communities. We can bring suicide prevention, intervention, post-vention, education and awareness to the district that you represent. ***But we need your help!***

If you are interested in learning more, finding out what it would take for us to be working in your district, and discussing solutions, contact SPAN-GA, Sheri McGuinness at georgiasurvivors@gmail.com or 770-354-7616.