

Community Organizing For Success in Suicide Prevention: Engaging Providers

- **2nd ½ of presentation by:**
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- **Fall, 2003**
- With examples from the remarkable communities & community leaders who organized the Tx- Suicide Prevention Community Network.

Austin, Burnet County, Dallas, Fredericksburg, Fort Worth, Fredericksburg, Longview, San Antonio, Victoria, Wichita Falls

“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.”

❖ Margaret Mead

Public Health Theory & History Re Community Involvement:

❖ 1. WHO Experience in Sustainability

<http://www.who.int/en/>

(search under com organizing)

❖ 2. CDC Faith-Based & Community Initiatives

<http://www.phppo.cdc.gov/dphsdr/FaithBase/>

❖ 3. American Public Health Association

http://apha.confex.com/apha/128am/techprogram/session_3213.htm

Building Public-Private Partnerships for Improving Community Health

(From fmargoll@aha.org abstract presented at The 128th Annual Meeting of APHA Boston, MA (Nov 12-16, 2000)

“In recent years, the nation’s health care system has been guided by market forces that control the distribution of health and health care resources. Many communities are seeking to shift control locally to ensure the use of local resources in a more effective and efficient manner.

The emergence of public-private partnerships characterized by cross-sectoral collaborative efforts among public health, social services, hospitals and health systems, and other organizations is proving to be an effective solution. Such partnerships promote shared accountability and greater focus on the health of the community through combined use of resources.”

Community Organizing For Success in Suicide Prevention: Engaging Providers

- ❖ 1. Commitment
- ❖ 2. Collaboration & Coalition Building
- ❖ 3. Community Culture
- ❖ 4. Creativity in Identifying Resources:
people & funds&expertise
- ❖ 5. Capacity to move forward & take action
- ❖ (i.e. "can-do" focus)
 - *"You really can change the world if you care enough."*
 - *Marlon Wright Edelman*

Commitment

❖ 1. Self-identified leaders (Ex)

Empowerment, support, recognition

(Ex:Fredericksburg Ex-Hospital Based MSW & Public Health Nurse)

(Ex: "the mental health mafia"

❖ 2. Group-identified leaders (Ex)

Asking, pleading, arm-twisting or
getting someone they know and trust to
do so.

(Houston Ex-MHAT-Houston/ Houston Suicide & Crisis Center/
Ben Taub Hospital/ Baylor College of Medicine)

*"Leadership is the art of getting someone else to do something
you want done because he wants to do it."* - Dwight D. Eisenhower

Commitment

❖ 3. No identified leaders (from your perspective – but need community involvement for geographical, political, or target population state-wide perspective) (10 communities targeted)

❖ **THERE ARE LEADERS – YOU JUST HAVE TO FIND THEM!**

❖ (Examples –TMA Contacts/ Child Fatality Review Team Contacts/
NASW/ Adv. Inc/TAP/TSP/MHAT/NAMI/Aging Network/ Suicide Survivors/ PTA Contacts / Board Contacts/ Legal Contacts/ Prof. Contacts/Friends of Friends, Businesses/ Coincidences (Kinkos) etc.)

Collaboration & Coalition Building

- ❖ 1. Stakeholders
(inclusive rather than exclusive)
--Use State Plan or National plan for lists--
- 2. Target Population/s
(Boy Scout ex)
- ❖ 3. Service providers
(NASW ex)
- ❖ 4. First responders
(Injury Prev. / GETAC Coalition ex)
- ❖ 5. Youth, Adults, Seniors

Collaboration & Coalition Building

- 6. Schools/Faith Communities/Hospitals
(Dallas & Houston Ex)
- ❖ 7. Business leaders (55 store chain)
- ❖ 8. Public health or mental health existing coalitions, associations, groups (MHAT Ex)
- ❖ 9. Non-profits with similar focus (Adv Inc)
- ❖ 10. Universities (UT San Antonio Med School Ex, Baylor College of Medicine, UT Southwestern, Dallas, UT Houston Health Science Center)
- ❖ *"Let us have faith that right makes might; and in that faith let us to the end dare to do our duty as we understand it." - Abraham Lincoln*

Community Culture

- ❖ 1. Familiarize yourself with the community's history & be able to verbalize it
 - ❖ ex.(Fort Worth's history as a "frontier cow town" & independent spirit means projects move differently than in Dallas' big city/big business culture)
 - ❖ How that affects planning, and organization & evaluation—
 - ❖ Rural vs. urban/open vs. close/"auslanders"
- ❖ *Mark Twain—"Customs do not concern themselves with right or wrong or reason. But they have to be obeyed; one reasons all around them until he is tired, but he must not transgress them, it is sternly forbidden."*

Community Culture

- ❖ 2. What is the history of public health & mental health in the community? (think through awareness, intervention & methodology in terms of the culture – what “fits” and what will not)
- ❖ 3. Don't push the river, but get in the flow of the community -- you can't help a community “fix” a problem that they don't perceive is a problem
 - *“Laws are sand, customs are rock. Laws can be evaded and punishment escaped, but an openly transgressed custom brings sure punishment. The penalty may be unfair, unrighteous, illogical, and a cruelty; no matter, it will be inflicted, just the same. Certainly, then, there can be but one wise thing for a visiting stranger to do—find out what the country's customs are, and refrain from offending against them.” Mark Twain*

Creativity in Identifying Resources

- ❖ 1. People
 - Big names
(from BOTH political parties)
 - Big hearts
(who has been affected personally)
 - Big pocketbooks
(it's not crass – it's reality)
 - Big experience
(in similar programs)
 - Big availability
(who has the time needed to put into the effort)

Creativity in Identifying Resources

- ❖ 2. Funds

Existing groups, government, associations, grants, fund raisers, faith communities, businesses, (no-fund or minimum fund projects are always possible)
- 3. Expertise

There is more than your think – in ALL communities. Universities, graduate students, retirees, teachers, business leaders, PTA presidents, etc.

*“Do what you can, with what you have, where you are.”
(Theodore Roosevelt).*

Capacity/Can Do Focus

❖ 1. Capacity

There's more than you think? Think outside the bureaucratic or state agency box. Put on your PTA "scrounging" hat. Use your Rotary or Lions Club contacts. Use university researchers & free or (almost free graduate students).

❖ 2. Can Do rather than Cannot Focus

❖ Visionaries/Action Orientation/Follow-Through

❖ "Liz Carpenter's rule of thumb" as press secretary

"All the means of action-- the shapeless masses, the materials-- lie everywhere about us; what we need is the celestial fire to change the flint into crystal, bright and clear." Longfellow

Capacity/Can Do Focus

❖ 3. Sustainability

➤ Use existing structures & organizations rather than creating new ones whenever possible.

➤ If you have to create a new one, follow an existing model.)

❖ 4. Support

➤ short term

➤ long term

Summary (The 5 Cs) Community Organizing For Success in Suicide Prevention

❖ 1. Commitment

❖ 2. Collaboration & Coalition Building

❖ 3. Community Culture

❖ 4. Creativity in Identifying Resources: people & funds & expertise

❖ 5. Capacity to move forward & take action

❖ (i.e. "can-do" focus)

- *"You really can change the world if you care enough."*
- *Marion Wright Edelman*

Conclusion

- ❖ **BELIEVE IN THE POSSIBILITY OF CHANGE – IN PEOPLE & COMMUNITIES**
- ❖ If suicide is based in part on hopelessness, those of us involved in suicide prevention, have to embody HOPE.
- ❖ So rather than the cynic's--
"Never underestimate the power of stupid people in large groups" - Anon
- ❖ **ACTION & CHANGE**
"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has. "
- ❖ **Margaret Mead**

EXAMPLES OF COMMUNITY FOCUS IN PUBLIC HEALTH (for background-not to use)

- *Building bridges: Community health centers join to create an enhanced response to domestic violence in the Vietnamese community
- *REACH Detroit Partnership: Community-based planning to address health disparities in the east and southwest communities of Detroit
- *A sensitivity indicator to reflect health promotion activities in the community

- *Building Public-Private Partnerships for Improving Community Health

- *Collaborating with neighborhood associations to address public health issue

- *Consensus building to enhance community engagement in a family strengthening program

- *Shifting the Focus: An Interdisciplinary Framework for Violence Prevention

- *Eliminating Health Disparities: Community and Environmental Approaches

- *Blueprint for Action: CDC's HIV Prevention Strategic Plan
