

Engaging Families

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Garrett Lee Smith State/Tribal
Suicide Prevention Meeting

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Families and Suicide Prevention

- Much of suicide prevention has been driven by family members who have survived the loss of a loved one to suicide.
- From their anguish they have insisted that suicide prevention should be a national priority.

Yet We Have Not Made Families Our Partners in Suicide Prevention

- The literature on suicide prevention contains surprisingly little information on engaging families either in prevention programs or in treatment settings.
- Frequently we hear about families in Emergency Departments with a loved one at risk for suicide where no one even speaks to the family, or speaks to them disrespectfully.

Families and Suicide Prevention

- In mental health settings, family members are often only involved in the treatment of suicidal patients if there is a specific indication, rather than not involving families only if there is a specific contraindication.

Positive Developments

- American Association of Suicidology Recommendations for Inpatient Treatment advise including families in multiple ways
- The SPRC/NAMI developed psychoeducational brochures for family members seen in Emergency Departments after a loved one's suicide attempt.

The Garrett Lee Smith Act

- The active consent provisions of the GLSMA, which require prior written consent of parents before youth can be involved in school based suicide prevention programs have led many of our grantees to redouble their efforts to reach out to families.
- For programs such as screening, parental involvement is crucial not only to provide initial consent, but even more importantly, to assure appropriate help is sought after a youth is identified as being at risk.

Today's Workshop

- Since so little has been written on engaging families in suicide prevention
- We decided we should approach this issue by:
- Learning about strategies that have been used to engage families in other areas of mental health to see what can be applied in suicide prevention.
- Inviting family members so we can learn from their experience.