Lifeline: Native American Initiative

Presented by Don Wetzel, Jr. & Lee Judy

Issues in Indian Country

- Stigma
  - The other “S” word
  - It is happening, but no one wants to talk about it.
  - Pride
  - The “Cowboy Up!” mentality.
  - Asking for help is a sign of weakness…
  - Small communities & gossip

- Funding agencies
  - Westernized research, programs & evaluations
  - Square peg in a round hole
  - Trust
  - Need to try new approaches
  - “Doing the same thing over and over and expecting a different outcome…”

- Lack of Resources

Trust, Commitment & Patience

- What has worked for us in MT & WY
  - Understanding these are Nations and they run everything, therefore they are very busy.
  - Have to develop a relationship
    - Visit by phone or face to face often
  - Have to have a vested interest in the Tribe
    - Fight for the Tribe
  - Speak & Act from the heart not the mind
  - Respect
  - Understand their Culture & History
  - Basketball
What has worked for us

- Use existing Lifeline
  - Establish Cultural training and education to call center with even a small history of the tribes
  - Tribal Cultural Guide
  - Present to the Tribal Council – Use proper Tribal Protocol
  - Possible trainings with the reservation members & staff
- Saturate the communities with Lifeline Number
  - Promotional items specific to the Tribe
  - Have members develop Lifeline items
  - Disseminate at appropriate events
  - Tournaments
  - Cell phone punch in
  - Explain that it is a crisis line

The Other Options

- Create your own call center
  - Volunteers available 24/7
  - Phone tree & sharing cell phones
  - Training
- Have 911 Handle it
  - Rarely trained in suicide prevention
  - Very busy
- Reservation-wide collaborative call centers
  - Tribal differences
  - Relatives
Lifeline Activities
- Tribally specific suicide prevention items
- ASIST/QPR/Grief Support trainings
- Community Resource Referral (resource guide development)

The Results
- Statistics for Montana Native American Reservations
  June 1, 2008 through December 31, 2008
  (Calls taken by Voices of Hope)
  19% of all calls were taken from the following reservations—disclosing that they were Native American.

Presenting Issue
Keep it Fresh…

- This is a constant effort!
- Change things up
  - PSAs
    - Radio & Television
    - Cowboy Up
  - Internet & Cell Phones
    - Texting and social networks
- Youth involvement
  - Get their input and develop what they think works
  - Native Youth Councils
    - Keeping them active and involved

Thank You for Your Time & All Your Efforts!

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