New Mexico: Crisis phones installed, activated at Gorge Bridge

February 20, 2015
News Type: Weekly Spark, Weekly Spark News
State: New Mexico

The Santa Fe New Mexican [1]

On each of ten new call boxes at the Rio Grande Gorge Bridge, a sign reads “There is hope. Make the call.” Below the sign is a single red button labeled “Emergency,” which activates a direct connection to the New Mexico Crisis and Access Line in Albuquerque. Hotline staff have been doing outreach with police, first responders, and vendors who work at the bridge to explain how the phones work. The New Mexico Department of Transportation is studying the possibility of either raising the height of the railings on the bridge or installing netting to prevent people from jumping to their deaths. While crisis hotline phones have been installed on many bridges across the country, it is not clear how effective they are. When phones were installed on four bridges in New York’s Hudson River Valley, they were part of a multifaceted effort that included training law enforcement officials and conducting a public awareness campaign about suicide prevention and mental health services. “It’s great we have the phones, but they are not a prevention strategy in and of themselves,” said Laura Harrison, executive director of the New Mexico Suicide Prevention Coalition. “We know barriers work.”

Spark Extra! Means Matter: How Bridge Barriers Help Prevent Suicide [2] is a 9-minute video that summarizes the research on this topic and offers further resources.

Links within this resource