Guam Behavioral Health and Wellness Center (GBHWC)

Program Name: Guam Focus on Life Program (GFOL)
Program Website: Focus On Life [1]
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The Guam Focus on Life Program (GFOL) is a strategic effort led by the Guam Behavioral Health and Wellness Center (GBHWC) to increase suicide prevention, intervention and postvention skills among direct service providers and natural helpers, to break the stigma on mental health and help-seeking, and to improve the standards of suicide-safe care for at risk youth ages 10-24. Building upon the successful outcomes of the 2008 and 2012 iterations of the grant, GBHWC will continue to use the 2019 GLS State/Tribal Youth Suicide Grant to reach this target population, which comprises 26% of Guam’s total population; with particular focus on youth experiencing grief, feelings of pain and loss, or suicide thoughts and behavior. GFOL has three fundamental goals: 1) At risk youth experiencing grief and feelings of pain and loss, or having suicidal thoughts and behaviors openly seek help from natural helpers and appropriate behavioral health services; 2) GBHWC, the island’s mental health agency, transforms its culture and services to achieve excellence in providing patient safety and safer suicide care; 3) Guam’s youth-serving providers operate in an integrated system of care that safely responds to individuals at risk for suicide. To pursue these goals, GBHWC is committed to achieving these objectives under GFOL. By 2024, 500 natural helpers will be trained to identify and refer at risk youth to appropriate services through evidence-based programs. GBHWC will revise Guam’s Youth Suicide Strategic Prevention and Intervention Plan to incorporate epidemiological inferences based on qualitative data offered by youth and adults with lived experience surviving either suicide loss or suicide attempt. In partnership with the University of Guam, GBHWC will add depth to the annual suicide statistics report by including researched qualitative data to inform future strategies on risk and protective factors that are unique to the island community. GFOL will also invest in at least three evidence-based programs that will normalize positive coping skills and increase help-seeking behavior among at risk youth, specifically those in Guam’s public school system, those completing their treatment from the local hospitals and psychiatric patient units, and those receiving support from youth-serving organizations. GFOL will utilize the Zero Suicide Framework (ZSF) to improve GBHWC’s ability to provide evidence based suicide-safer care to patients. By 2024, GFOL will implement the ZSF in all aspects of GBHWC’s services; including its local crisis hotline to operate as a member of the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (NSPL) network, receiving at least 70% of NSPL calls from the island locally. Lastly, GFOL will establish a Suicide Prevention Task Force, made up of key direct service providers for youth at risk for suicide, work collaboratively to ensure that they are trained to identify, screen, refer, treat and follow-up on at risk youth, creating a synergetic support system. All proposed objectives and strategies for GFOL will be continuously evaluated and improved for effectiveness to reach a total of 2,646 in Year 1, 13,550 for the life of the GLS grant.

Links within this resource

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