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Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training

Program Snapshot

Evidence Ratings*

Promising Self-Concept

*Ratings definitions can be found in the appendix.

Program Contact

Heather Stokes, MSW
Vice-President of Strategic Development, LivingWorks Education, Inc.
1-888-733-5484
heather.stokes@livingworks.net

Dissemination/Implementation Contact

Heather Stokes, MSW
Vice-President of Strategic Development, LivingWorks Education, Inc.
heather.stokes@livingworks.net
www.livingworks.net

Program Type

Mental health promotion

Gender

Male
Female

Age

13-17 (Adolescent)
18-25 (Young adult)
26-55 (Adult)
55+ (Older adult)

Geographic Locations

Rural and/or frontier
Tribal
Non-U.S.

Settings

Other

Race/Ethnicity

Other

Implementation/Dissemination

Implementation materials available

Dissemination materials available

Program Description

The Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST) program was developed in 1983. ASIST is a 2-day training program aimed at developing “suicide first aid” skills and competencies. The program is available to anyone seeking to increase the immediate safety of persons at risk of suicide. Since people at risk are often inclined to reach out first to family and friends, ASIST fulfills a “gatekeeper” role that seeks to build and empower a broad network of community helpers. ASIST also provides those in more formal helping roles with professional development to ensure that they are prepared to provide suicide first aid help as part of the care they provide.

The ASIST model involves assessment of suicide risk and the development of a “safepan,” which provides various options depending on present and future risk, available resources, and the needs of the person at risk. Options include not only referrals to formal mental health services, but also connection to and support from friends, family members, and other sources. The ASIST philosophy posits that the suicide intervention may be sufficient to reduce risk without the need for further referral.

ASIST comprises five progressive components in which trainees gradually build comfort and understanding around suicide and suicide intervention. ASIST participants learn to 1) understand attitudes about suicide; 2) provide guidance and suicide first aid to a person at risk; 3) identify the key elements of an effective suicide safety plan and the actions required to implement it; 4) appreciate the value of improving community suicide prevention resources; and 5) recognize important aspects of suicide prevention, including life-promotion and self-care.

ASIST has been implemented in multiple locations in the United States and internationally. ASIST workshops are open to anyone over the age of 16; no previous experience or education is required. The 2-day workshop is interactive and includes audiovisual aids, discussions in large and small groups, and skills practice and development. A half-day, “tune-up training” is available for ASIST participants who would like a review and improve ASIST-related knowledge and skills.

Evaluation Findings by Outcome



OUTCOME: SELF-CONCEPT

PROGRAM EFFECTS ACROSS ALL STUDIES	This program is promising for improving personal resiliency and self-concept. The review of the program yielded sufficient evidence of a favorable effect. Based on one study and one measure, the effect size for personal resiliency and self-concept is .13 (95% CI = .03, .24). Click here to find out what other programs have found about the average effect sizes for this outcome.
KEY STUDY FINDINGS	Data from monitored calls of suicidal individuals showed a significant improvement in callers' behaviors (e.g., feeling less depressed, less suicidal, less overwhelmed) by the end of calls handled by ASIST trained counselors, compared with the wait-list control group (Gould et al., 2013).
MEASURES	Gould et al. (2013): Counselor's ratings on the changes in the callers based on the caller's affect and statements during the call (i.e., feeling less agitated, less alone, less depressed, less overwhelmed, less suicidal, more confident and in control, and more hopeful)
ADDITIONAL DETAILS	None provided.

References

STUDIES REVIEWED

Gould, M., Cross, W., Pisani, A., Munfakh, M., & Kleinman, M. (2013). Impact of Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training on the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline. *Suicide and Life-Threatening Behavior*, 43(6), 676–691. doi: 10.1111/sltb.12049

SUPPLEMENTAL AND CITED DOCUMENTS

None provided.

OTHER STUDIES

None provided.

Study Evaluation Methodology

GOULD ET AL. (2013)

STUDY DESIGN NARRATIVE	The study randomized suicide crisis centers into an intervention group, in which counselors received ASIST training, and a wait-list control group.
SAMPLE DESCRIPTION	Data used in the study were derived from monitored calls from 1,410 suicidal individuals from 17 lifeline crisis centers during 2008 to 2009. Seven hundred sixty-four of the calls were directed to centers randomized to the intervention group, while 646 were directed to the centers in the control group. No demographic information was provided.

Resources for Dissemination and Implementation *

** Dissemination and implementation information was provided by the program developer or program contact at the time of review. Profile information may not reflect the current costs or availability of materials (including*

newly developed or discontinued items). The dissemination/implementation contact for this program can provide current information on the availability of additional, updated, or new materials.

Implementation/Training and Technical Assistance Information

Approximately 1.25 million people have taken ASIST training. ASIST has been implemented in multiple states in the United States and internationally in Australia, Canada, England, Ireland, New Zealand, Northern Ireland, Norway, Scotland, Singapore, South Korea, and Wales. Organizations and agencies that have adopted ASIST include the U.S. Army and Navy, the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (NSPL), the California Mental Health Services Authority (CalMHSA), the New York State Office of Mental Health (NYSOMH), Ireland’s National Office of Suicide Prevention, Lifeline Australia, Scotland’s Choose Life Suicide Prevention Training Program, and Norway’s Action Plan Against Suicide (VIVAT), among others.

ASIST is a 2-day, in-person workshop, in which two Registered ASIST Trainers deliver the ASIST model, based on five progressive components. By following this progression, participants gradually build comfort and understanding around suicide and suicide intervention. Anyone over the age of 16 can participate in an ASIST workshop, and no background experience is required.

ASIST is developed and disseminated by LivingWorks Education, Inc. A list of upcoming workshops, which are open to the public, is available via the LivingWorks website; agencies may also host their own workshops. By contacting LivingWorks, it is possible to arrange for trainers to travel and present the workshop locally. Individuals interested in providing their own ASIST workshops may become Registered ASIST Trainers through a process that includes completing the in-person, 5-day Training-for-Trainers (T4T) course, extensively studying the ASIST Trainer Manual, and presenting a minimum of three ASIST workshops within 1 year of the T4T. Ongoing technical assistance is provided to ASIST trainers by LivingWorks through on-demand coaching. Implementation and organization guides, as well as other tools, are also available to support ASIST trainers. Details on the process for becoming a Registered ASIST Trainer are provided on the website. Fidelity to the ASIST model is assured through a Trainer Feedback system in which trainers submit reports on workshops, which are then reviewed by quality assurance experts who provide instructive feedback and, if necessary, provide remedial measures. ASIST workshop participants complete post-training questionnaires that are reviewed for quality control.

Dissemination Information

The LivingWorks website is the central source of information on the ASIST program, which is geared to the general public as well as to those who have participated in ASIST or who are interested in becoming registered trainers. Through the website, the public may learn more about the program, workshops, and training processes; locate upcoming ASIST and Training for Trainers (T4T) workshops; order resources; and read FAQs, news, and stories. The website also includes a section that allows trainers to list upcoming workshops to the directory, ask questions about the training process, apply for grants to support skills development, and submit workshop reports. Some website information is available in Spanish or French.

Summary Table of RFDI Materials

Description of item	Required or optional	Cost	Where obtained
Implementation Information			

ASIST Training In-person, 2-day workshop provided by two registered LivingWorks Trainers, held at various training locations Participant Kit available in large print. Also available in French and Norwegian	Required	Varies	View the list of upcoming workshops on the website: https://www.livingworks.net/programs/asist/ "Find a Training"
ASIST ReSet In-person, 1-day booster training provided by registered LivingWorks Trainers, held at various training locations	Optional	Varies	Contact the program supplier: Living Works
Training to become an ASIST Trainer (T4T) In-person, 5-day training provided by registered LivingWorks Trainers, held at various training locations Cost includes training and related trainer materials	Required	\$2,855	https://www.livingworks.net/programs/asist/
Associate Care TA Direct technical assistance provided for needs related to training, trainers, and implementation Available on an as-needed basis in person or via phone or videoconferencing	Optional	Information not available	https://www.livingworks.net/programs/asist/
Operations TA Direct technical assistance provided for needs related to products, materials, and shipping Available on an as-needed basis by email or via phone or videoconferencing	Optional	Information not available	https://www.livingworks.net/programs/asist/
ASIST Trainer Kit Includes Trainer's Manual, training videos, PowerPoint slides, posters, and other materials Also available in French and Norwegian Distributed at ASIST Training for Trainers (T4T)	Required	\$38.10 per kit. Discounts available for Department of Defense and volume purchases	https://www.livingworks.net/programs/asist/
ASIST Trainer Coaching Expert ASIST Trainers provide coaching to new Trainers on an as-needed basis Also available in French Provided by email or	Optional	Information not available	https://www.livingworks.net/programs/asist/

via tele- or video-conferencing			
Trainer Feedback Quality assurance experts read training reports and provide continuous feedback Also available in French or Korean Provided by email or via tele- or video-conferencing	Required	Information not available	https://www.livingworks.net/programs/asist/
ASIST Feedback Form Post-training participant questionnaire Also available in French or Korean	Required	Information not available	https://www.livingworks.net/programs/asist/
ASIST Trainer Workshop Report Post-training report completed by the Trainer Also available in French or Korean	Required	Information not available	https://www.livingworks.net/programs/asist/
ASIST ReSet In-person, 1-day group workshop conducted by a registered LivingWorks Trainer	Optional	Varies	https://www.livingworks.net/programs/asist/
Dissemination Information			
Flyers On ASIST Training and ASIST Training for Trainers (T4T) Available in PDF or printed formats to qualified Trainers	Optional	Free	Contact the program supplier
Trainer Newsletter Distributed by email on a monthly basis to qualified Trainers	Optional	Free	Contact the program supplier
LivingWorks website Includes information on the ASIST program, resources and support, and news and stories	Optional	Free	https://www.livingworks.net/programs/asist/

Appendix

Evidence Rating Definitions

Effective

The evaluation evidence has strong methodological rigor, and the short-term effect on this outcome is favorable. More specifically, the short-term effect favors the intervention group and the size of the effect is substantial.

Promising

The evaluation evidence has strong methodological rigor, and the short-term effect on this outcome is favorable. More specifically, the short-term effect favors the intervention group and the size of the effect is substantial.

Ineffective

The evaluation evidence has sufficient methodological rigor, but there is little to no short-term effect. More specifically, the short-term effect does not favor the intervention group and the size of the effect is negligible. Occasionally, the evidence indicates that there is a negative short-term effect. In these cases, the short-term effect harms the intervention group and the size of the effect is substantial.