

SUICIDE POSTVENTION AS SUICIDE PREVENTION

What is it?

Postvention is post-suicide intervention. Although commonly viewed as a response strategy, postvention can also serve as a powerful suicide prevention strategy.

Why is it important?

Planning for postvention prepares those members of a community who are responsible for leading the response to a suicide death to take actions that will promote healing and reduce risk at the levels of the family, community, and society. It also prepares the media to report on a suicide death in a way that can help those who are vulnerable to get the support they need.

What are the challenges to implementation?

- People may not believe a suicide death could happen in their own community.
- People may consider suicide to be a taboo topic for discussion.
- People may not realize that a suicide death can impact others far beyond the immediate family and/or over an extended period of time.
- People who are responsible for responding to a suicide death and caring for survivors may not acknowledge their own need for support.
- When resources are scarce, people may prefer to fund prevention rather than postvention efforts.

How can we overcome those challenges?

- Recognize that postvention is an integral component of a comprehensive suicide prevention effort.
- Create postvention policies and procedures that address the needs of the immediate family and friends as well as the needs of community members in culturally congruent ways.
- Work with media in advance so they understand the importance of adhering to reporting guidelines.
- Train first responders, mental health and social service providers, funeral directors, faith leaders, police officers, school personnel, etc., to respond appropriately. Make sure they have support as well.
- Encourage survivors of suicide loss to participate in [International Survivors of Suicide Day](#) (the Saturday before Thanksgiving each year).

“Suicide is the proverbial ‘pebble in the pond.’ We need to pay attention to the initial wave that impacts the family and friends as well as the ripples that flow out into the community and larger society.”

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