

Community Postvention Response Service. Assisting Communities Following Suicide

Community Responses to Suicide

When a suicide occurs it can have a distressing impact upon those directly bereaved and upon others in the wider community (neighbours, colleagues, schoolmates). Those affected try to understand what has happened and concerns can quickly build in the community. On occasion others in the community may also attempt or complete suicide (referred to as "suicide contagion"). This can occur when the original suicide influences others through imitation, glorification of the person who died, sensationalisation of their death, and the presence of a highly charged emotional environment. Interagency co-operation and co-ordination becomes essential in this context. Because suicide contagion is relatively rare, communities may not always have people in their midst who have experience in managing such events. In other cases concerns are held for people who are not engaged with any particular provider (e.g., are not at school and are not under mental health services), and it is unclear who will take the lead to ensure they receive assistance.



Clinical Advisory Services Aotearoa

Clinical Advisory Services
Aotearoa Limited
PO Box 32599 Devonport
North Shore 0744
phone +64 9 448 3800
fax +64 9 448 3850
email mailbox@casa.org.nz
web www.casa.org.nz

Community
Postvention
Response
Service.
Assisting
Communities
Following Suicide



Clinical Advisory Services Aotearoa

What does a Community Postvention Response Service do?

The Community Postvention Response Service is there to help communities in any way that is needed.

Common requests include:

- Analysing available information to ascertain if a cluster of suicides or suicide attempts has occurred, or might be occurring.
- Facilitating co-ordination meetings between all the different sectors involved (e.g., community groups, Child Youth & Family, Mental Health services, Group Special Education, Victim Support) so that the sectors can plan together and have a co-ordinated approach.
- Providing training in suicide screening, or refresher training for professionals in suicide risk assessment as soon as it is requested.
- Assisting the community with strategies for working with media to ensure safe and helpful media reporting.
- Working alongside agencies to help them identify which people in the community may be at risk for suicide attempts, and planning how to mitigate the risks.
- Providing resources on topics such as bereavement by suicide, suicide contagion, and how to form effective postvention working groups.
- Providing advice on any specific issues that arise (e.g., memorial services, internet memorial sites, overcoming barriers to accessing necessary services)
- Facilitating a 'debriefing' meeting for service providers at the completion of the community response.
- Providing advice on how to address the long terms implications for a community (e.g., planning responses to anniversaries of the deaths, looking at how to address any gaps in service provision identified)

The team can either work with an individual agency that requests support, or alternatively provide assistance for all sectors across a community. The service is free of charge and is funded by The Ministry of Health.

Who staffs the Community Postvention Response Service?

The Community Postvention Response Service is run by Clinical Advisory Services Aotearoa (CASA). CASA is a nationwide group of registered psychologists, social workers and nurses (see website www.casa.org.nz) who have considerable experience in suicide prevention and postvention. All endeavours are made to have a local CASA member lead the community response. CASA also has cultural advisors who link into local iwi services to ensure service is provided in a culturally appropriate manner.

How do we contact the team and how do we know it's time to contact them?

Sometimes it can be very difficult for communities to know whether suicide contagion is occurring, or whether the community should be concerned about the potential for this to occur. The Community Postvention Response Service is aware of this and hence we offer a service whereby anyone can make contact and discuss what is happening in their community and what they are concerned about. We will collect information and work with the caller to decide what steps, if any, may be needed. Service can be offered by telephone or through face to face meetings in the community and we will act to ensure we offer a timely response to any requests made.

You can contact the service on free phone 0800-448 908 or via email at cprs@casa.org.nz