

TSPN CALL TO ACTION

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TENNESSEE SUICIDE PREVENTION NETWORK



TENNESSEE LIVES COUNT PROJECT OUTCOMES FEATURED IN *BEHAVIORAL HEALTHCARE*

The workings and achievements of the Tennessee Lives Count (TLC) Project has been profiled in the online newsletter of *Behavioral Healthcare*, one of the leading publications for mental health professionals.

TLC is a state early intervention/prevention project to reduce suicides/attempts for youth aged 10-24. It is funded by the Tennessee Department of Mental Health through a grant from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, authorized by the Garrett Lee Smith Memorial Act of 2004. The program recently concluded its third grant cycle, which focused on youth within the Tennessee Department of Children's Services Juvenile Justice Division.

The *Behavioral Healthcare* article summarized a presentation about the TLC Project made at the recent American Association of Suicidology conference (see page 3). The presentation was led by Jennifer Lockman of the Centerstone Research Institute (CRI), which provides logistical and statistical analysis for TLC. Lockman documented the mechanisms and tactics employed during TLC's second grant period, in which project staff provided a modified version of the "Question, Persuade, and Refer" (QPR) suicide intervention protocol to youth gatekeepers—people in a position to identify troubled and suicidal youth, including teachers, school nurses, school counselors, juvenile justice staff, physicians, nurses, and foster parents.

"The strength of this approach is that it teaches gatekeepers that they encounter people every day who may be at risk for suicide and that we all play a role in taking care of each other and ensuring that we get help when needed," Lockman explained during the course of her presentation.

The project also included a detailed evaluation component developed by Centerstone, which measured how much participants learned during the training session, how much knowledge they retained six months after the session, and whether the gatekeepers were able to use the QPR protocol to help youth in their care. Lockman presented some key findings from the evaluation segment during her presentation:

- Participants in the training were better able to identify youth at risk for a suicide attempt.
- Two-thirds of the gatekeepers trained were, on at least one occasion, able to guide a student through all three steps of the QPR protocol—in other words, they were able to reach out to a young person, talk them out of harming themselves or others, and put them in touch with a counselor or mental health agency. However, the gatekeepers usually had to work with multiple colleagues or agencies to make sure the child got the help they needed.
- The protocol as put forth by the TLC program did not always work with some groups and organizations, particularly when more than one person participated in the helping process. Some changes were recommended were needed as time went on.

The *Behavioral Healthcare* article, an online exclusive, is available through the periodical's website (www.behavioral.net). More information about the findings Lockman presented are available from James Schut, Ph.D., lead researcher for TLC, at jschut@trevecca.edu.

Readers may also be interested in a presentation on TLC's recently concluded juvenile justice project which was offered during TSPN's 10th Anniversary Symposium in April. This presentation is available for free download via the TSPN website (www.tspn.org/wp-content/uploads/TLC-TSPN10.pdf).



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STATE MENTAL HEALTH FUNDS SAFE FROM BUDGET CUTS



Governor Bill Haslam has reinstated \$25 million in mental health funding within Tennessee's fiscal 2012 budget, ensuring continuity of mental health services across the state.

"(The General Assembly) managed to find recurring money to restore the 8.5 percent cut that had been proposed. That would have taken \$25 million out of the community mental health system," said Sita Diehl, director of state policy and advocacy for the Tennessee chapter of the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), in an article on the forestalled cuts in the May 14 edition of the *Tennessean*.

Tennessee ranked 13th among the states for percentage of funding cut from its mental health system between 2009 and 2011, a period which saw \$1.6 billion cut from state budgets nationwide according to a NAMI report. Those reductions in funds followed a series of TennCare cuts going back to 2005.

The article noted that new federal legislation, such as the Mental Health Parity Act of 2008 and the Affordable Care Act of 2010, will help people with mental health issues obtain more and better insurance coverage in the years to come. The Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation estimates that only 49% of U.S. mental health expenditures are covered by private insurance, which have typically offered less coverage for mental health care than for medical conditions. The remainder is covered by public insurance programs like Medicaid or TennCare.

"We are at the point of being on the radar screen... For so long, mental health was not even recognized. We are just getting to the point where people realize that mental health is not just addiction and homelessness. It is women who just had babies. It's our returning soldiers. It's our aging mentors," explained Tom Starling, Executive Director of the Mental Health Association of Middle Tennessee (MHAMT). Michael J. Fitzpatrick, NAMI Tennessee's executive director, concurs: "I think it is now assumed that you can't have health coverage without mental health... I think that the era of debate about whether to fund mental health is over."

The effects of mental health cuts came into prominence in the *Tennessean's* April 10 publication of the obituary of Scott Zingheim, who died by suicide in Knoxville on March 31. In the paid notice, Zingheim's parents blamed TennCare cuts for a deterioration of his schizophrenia that ultimately led to his death.

LIVINGWORKS TO PRESENT AT ADVISORY COUNCIL RETREAT

Representatives of LivingWorks will address TSPN's Advisory Council during the annual retreat, confirmed for June 8-9 at Montgomery Bell State Park Inn in Burns.



LivingWorks (registered as LivingWorks Education Inc.) is a public service corporation focusing on suicide prevention and education. Through its ASIST, safeTALK, suicideTALK, and suicideCare training protocols, the Canadian-based company provides community-based training in suicide prevention through a network of trainers spanning six countries. More than 500,000 community participants have been trained in suicide intervention skills through LivingWorks since its establishment in 1983.

Jerry Swanner out of LivingWorks's U.S. offices in Fayetteville, North Carolina will provide information about the company and the programs it offers, especially the ASIST protocol. ASIST, short for Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training, is frequently used by TSPN and TLC for intensive trainings sessions tailored to clinical staff and mental health professionals.

In addition to the LivingWorks presentation, Advisory Council members will participate in a planning session for the next fiscal year and receive an update on the TLC Project from Principal Investigator Lygia Williams, MA, within the Tennessee Department of Mental Health's Office of Special Populations.

A report on retreat proceedings will appear in the July edition of this newsletter.

FIFTH NATIONAL SUICIDE AND THE BLACK CHURCH CONFERENCE

The Fifth National Suicide and the Black Church Conference will take place on June 22-23 at the Student Alumni Center on the University of Tennessee-Memphis campus, located at 800 Madison Avenue in Memphis.

The theme for this year's event is "The Sun Will Shine Again!" It is dedicated to the memory of Dr. James (Jim) Clemons, a well-known suicide prevention researcher and advocate who co-founded the conference in 2003. Clemons died in a train accident in Gaithersburg, Maryland on January 11 at the age of 81.

Among the guest speakers confirmed for this year's event:

- Dr. Donna Holland Barnes, co-founder and President of the National Organization for People of Color Against Suicide (NOPCAS)
- Dr. Alex Crosby, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)
- Rev. Dr. Gerald Durley, Senior Pastor, Providence Baptist Church in Atlanta
- Gerald and Elsie Weyrauch, founders of the Suicide Prevention Action Network (SPAN USA, now part of the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention)
- Dr. Oliver Williams, Executive Director of the Institute on Domestic Violence in the African American Community

TSPN Executive Director Scott Ridgway is also scheduled to present. The evening of June 22 will include a concert highlighted by singer Ernestine Dillard, who has performed at previous Suicide and the Black Church Conferences.

Online registration is available at the website of the Memphis Healing Center (www.memphishealingcenter.com), which is hosting this event. A registration form is also available on the TSPN website (tspn.org/wp-content/uploads/06-22-11-SBCC.pdf). For more information about the conference, contact Bishop William Young of the Healing Center at (901) 370-4673 or yhealer@aol.com.



Rev. Dr. Durley (left) will provide the luncheon address at this year's conference. Dr. Williams (center) is the event's primary plenary speaker. Dillard will perform during the "Night of Inspiration" concert on the evening of June 22 (photos of Durley and Williams courtesy of the Memphis Healing Center; photo of Dillard courtesy of earnestinedillard.com).

NEW SUPPORT GROUP AVAILABLE IN WAYNESBORO

A new support group for survivors of suicide is available for residents of Waynesboro and surrounding areas.

The HOPES (Healing Opportunities for People Experiencing Suicide Loss) meets at 7 PM on the second Tuesday of each month at Wayne County Helping Hands, located within Suite C at the Medical Office Building at 103 J.V. Mangubat Drive in Waynesboro. For more information about the group, call (931) 724-2223 and ask for Becky; she is available to take calls about HOPES from 5-8 PM on weekdays. Wayne County Helping Hands also offers a 24-hour assistance line, available at (931) 722-6888.

TSPN sponsors several survivor support groups across the state of Tennessee. Group meetings are open to anyone who has lost a loved one through suicide or who is helping someone who has lost a loved one through suicide. They provide safe spaces for survivors to explore their feelings of grief and anger, to raise questions and doubts, and to work through the grieving process with the help of other people making the same journey.

A list of suicide survivor support groups supported and promoted by TSPN is available on the Network's website (tspn.org/for-survivors-of-suicide) along with information on support groups for survivors of suicide attempts (tspn.org/for-survivors-of-suicide-attempts).

TSPN would like to acknowledge the Wayne County News for its regular promotion of HOPES and for bringing this group's existence to our attention.



The logo for Wayne County Helping Hands, the non-profit hosting HOPES. More information about Wayne County Helping Hands is available at their website (www.waynecountyhelpinghands.org).

AAS CELEBRATES 10TH ANNIVERSARY OF NATIONAL STRATEGY

Participants at the AAS conference in April observed the tenth anniversary of the publication of the National Strategy for Suicide Prevention.

The *National Strategy for Suicide Prevention: Goals and Objectives for Action* (NSSP) was developed and launched in 2001 through the combined work of advocates, clinicians, researchers, and survivors across the country. It represented the first nationwide effort to prevent suicide through such a coordinated approach. The NSSP set forth a suicide prevention framework to coordinate resources and deliver culturally appropriate services at all levels of a public-private partnership.

A record 950 people attended the conference in Portland, Oregon, on April 14-17, according to a blog post by Jerry Reed, Director of the Suicide Prevention Resource Center. TSPN Executive Director Scott Ridgway was among the presenters at this event, leading a well-received session on building a statewide suicide prevention coalition. Additionally, Jennifer Lockman of the Centerstone Research Institute presented findings from the TLC Project's gatekeeper training initiative (see page 1).

The National Strategy is available as a free download at the online storefront of the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) (www.store.samhsa.gov).



Leading officials from some of the nation's top mental health and suicide prevention agencies attended a celebration of the National Strategies' tenth anniversary. Pictured left to right: Jane Pearson, Ph.D., of the Division of Services and Intervention Research within the National Institutes for Mental Health, Mort Silverman, MD, Senior Advisor to the Suicide Prevention Resource Center (SPRC), Lanny Berman, Ph.D., APBB, Executive Director of AAS, Dan Reidenberg, Psy.D., FAPA, Executive Director of Suicide Awareness Voices of Education (SAVE), David Litts, OD, Associate Director of SPRC, Jerry Reed, Executive Director of SPRC, and Peggy West, Ph.D, MSW, Senior Advisor to SPRC (photo courtesy of Mr. Reed).

CDC REPORT TRACES EFFECTS OF ECONOMY ON SUICIDE RATES

Researchers at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have released the most comprehensive report to date on the effect of the economy and suicide rates, covering eighty years' worth of data.

The idea of suicides increasing in a bad economy has ascended to conventional wisdom and has been studied considerably, but the CDC report is the first to draw a definite connection between business cycles and age-specific suicide rates. Specifically, the study focused on the 25-64 age group, generally considered the prime employment age, between the years 1928 and 2007. The report confirmed that within this group, the suicide rate rose every time the U.S. economy went into recession and fell during periods of economic expansion.

The study noticed that suicide rates among adults 55 and over, the age group most likely to be out of the workforce, declined the most during the 80-year period studied.

"Knowing suicides increased during economic recessions and fell during expansions underscores the need for additional suicide prevention measures when the economy weakens," explained James Mercy, Ph.D., acting director of CDC's Injury Center's Division of Violence Prevention, in an April 14 press release on the study. "It is an important finding for policy makers and those working to prevent suicide."

The report offers prevention strategies that should be given special emphasis during national or local economic reversals. These include social support and counseling for people losing their jobs and/or homes; promoting connectedness between individuals, families, community organizations, and support services; and increasing access to crisis centers and mental health services.

The citation for this study is as follows: Luo, F., et al. (2011). Impact of business cycles on US suicide rates, 1928-2007. *American Journal of Public Health* 101:1139-1146. Copies of the study are also available from the *American Journal of Public Health* by calling (202) 777-2511 or e-mailing Patricia.Warin@apha.org.

Suicide and Business Cycles

Periods of economic recession that coincided with rises in the suicide rate:

- 1928-1933: the Great Depression
- 1937-1938: end of most New Deal programs
- 1973-1975: fuel crisis triggered by OPEC embargo
- 1980-1982: the "Double-Dip Recession"

Between 1928 and 1932 the suicide rate went up by 22.8% (from 18.0 per 100,000 to 22.1), the greatest increase in any four-year period in U.S. history.

Periods of economic expansion that coincided with drops in the suicide rate:

- 1939-1945: World War II
- 1991-2001: Longest period of expansion in U.S. history.

The U.S. suicide rate hit an all-time low in 2000, to a rate of 10.4 per 100,000.

TSPN REGIONAL CALENDAR

No December meetings are scheduled unless otherwise marked. Dates in **bold and in pigment red** indicate alternate meeting dates intended to accommodate state holidays or other previously scheduled events.

East Tennessee Region

monthly, 3rd Thursday, 12:00 PM
Mental Health Association of East Tennessee, Inc., 9050 Executive Park Drive, Suite 104-A, Knoxville, 37923
June 16, July 21, August 18, September 15, October 20, and November 17

Memphis/Shelby County Region

monthly, 3rd Tuesday, 11:30 AM
The Community Foundation of Greater Memphis, 1900 Union Avenue, Memphis, 38104
July 19, August 16, September 20, October 18 and November 15

Mid-Cumberland Region

monthly, 2nd Thursday, 9:30 AM
Non-Profit Conference Center, 293 Plus Park Boulevard, Suite 201, Nashville, 37217
July 14, August 11, September 8, October 13, November 10, and December 8

Northeast Region

monthly, 4th Tuesday, 10:30 AM
Boone's Creek Christian Church, 305 Boone's Creek Road, Gray, 37615
June 28, July 26, August 23, September 27, October 25, and November 22

Rural West

monthly, 3rd Wednesday, 10:30 AM
Behavioral Health Initiatives, 36C Sandstone Circle, Jackson, 38305
June 15, July 20, August 17, September 21, October 19, and November 16

South Central

monthly, 2nd Monday, 10:00 AM
Conference Room A, South Central Regional Health Office, 1216 Trotwood Avenue, Columbia 38401
June 13, July 11, August 8, September 12, October 10, November 14, and December 12

Southeast Region

monthly, 1st Thursday, 10:00 AM
Volunteer Behavioral Health Care System, 413 Spring Street, Chattanooga, 37405
July 7, August 4, September 1, October 6, November 3, and December 1

Upper Cumberland Region

monthly, 4th Thursday, 9:00 AM
Volunteer Behavioral Health Care Systems, 1200 Willow Avenue, Cookeville, 38502
June 23, July 28, August 25, September 22, October 27, and **November 17**

Intra-State Department Meetings

Tennessee Department of Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities, Third Floor Conference Room, Cordell Hull Building, 425 Fifth Avenue North, Nashville, 37243 (3:00 PM)
August 17 and November 16

Advisory Council

June 8-9 (Montgomery Bell State Park Inn, Burns)
September 7 (location to be announced)

Blount County Mental Health Awareness and Suicide Prevention Alliance

monthly, 1st Friday, 12:00 PM
Blount County Health Department Conference Room, 302 McGhee Street, Maryville, 37801
June 3, July 1, August 5, September 2, October 7, November 4, and December 2

Davidson County Suicide Prevention Task Force

monthly, 4th Wednesday, 3:00 PM
June 29, July 27, August 24, September 28, October 26, and **November 16**

Giles County Suicide Prevention Task Force

quarterly, 3rd Monday, 1:30 PM
Giles County Career Center, 125 South Cedar Lane, Pulaski, 38478
July 18, October 10, and **December 12**

Hickman-Perry County Suicide Prevention Task Force

monthly, 4th Friday, 1:30 PM
Hickman Community Hospital, Senior Care Building, 135 East Swan Street, Centerville, 37033
June 24, July 22, August 26, September 23, October 28, and **November 18**

ADVISORY COUNCIL CONTACT INFORMATION

If you are interested in getting involved with TSPN on a local level or have other questions, contact the chairperson of your region as indicated by the map provided below:

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