

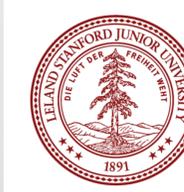


Community Responses to a Teen Suicide Cluster

Megan Baker, MD¹; Robert De Geus²; Steven Adelsheim, MD^{1,2}; Shashank V. Joshi, MD^{1,2}

¹Department of Psychiatry & Behavioral Sciences, Lucile Packard Children's Hospital at Stanford University

²Project Safety Net, Palo Alto



None of the authors or their immediate family members have a personal financial relationship with the products or services related to this project.

Background

Palo Alto, California (PA) is a Bay Area community with a population just over 65,000 located in the northwest corner of Santa Clara County. Since 2009, the community has experienced two separate *suicide clusters*—defined as a group of three or more suicides in close time or geographic proximity. In a community that is demographically 60% white and 27% Asian, Asian-American students have been disproportionately represented in the most recent suicides.

When responding to suicides, CDC guidelines emphasize the need for a coordinated community-wide response. The following highlights some of the community efforts that have taken place as part of Palo Alto's crisis response, focusing on 2014-2015.

Community Responses

HEARD Alliance (Healthcare Alliance in Response to Adolescent Depression and related conditions)

Partners: Stanford Children's Health and community health care professionals, including primary care, schools and mental health
Mission: to increase collaboration among primary care, mental health and educational professionals to enhance the community's ability to respond to adolescent depression
Outputs: Website (heardalliance.org) serves as resource for primary care screening tools, mental health resources, and professional referrals; Comprehensive Suicide Prevention Toolkit developed based on national best practices

Professional affiliations and consultation partners:
 Suicide Prevention Resource Center (SPRC)
 American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP)
 Sources of Strength/ University of Rochester
 Let's Bring Change to Mind
 Columbia University

Palo Alto Unified School District (PAUSD)

Includes both public high schools (Palo Alto HS and Gunn HS)

- Sources of Strength as universal suicide prevention and health promotion
- Break Free From Depression as curricular intervention for all students and staff
- Access to on-campus counseling through site-based licensed therapists & Adolescent Counseling Services (ACS)
- Psychiatric consultation through Lucile Packard Children's Hospital at Stanford
- Suicide prevention as a priority and school board policy
- Changes to school infrastructure with goal of reducing student stress and promotion of wellness through specific programs and positive messaging

Community Responses (continued)

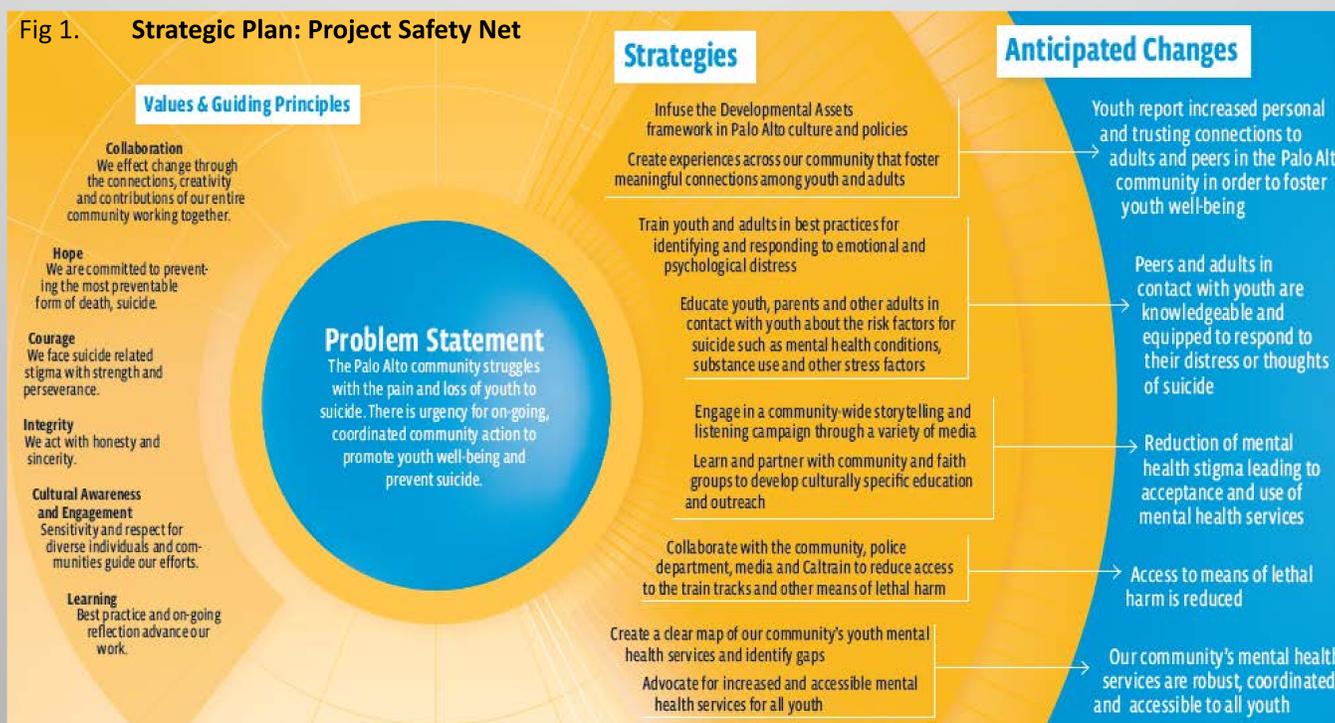
Project Safety Net Palo Alto

Partners: community collaborative with >20 organizations represented, including City of Palo Alto, PA Unified School District, health and mental health partners, advocacy organizations, and others

Mission: develop and implement an effective, comprehensive, community-based mental health plan for youth well-being

Recent initiatives:

1. Restructuring to a *Collective Impact model* (see Figure 2)
2. Free *gatekeeper training* in QPR (Question, Persuade, Refer) suicide prevention for the community
3. *Means restriction* that limits access to train tracks
 - higher and more comprehensive fencing along rail corridor
 - intrusion detection system using thermal infrared cameras
 - continued presence of security guards during hours of operation



Education and Awareness Events

Partners: Stanford Psychiatry Department in lead, with the school district, Palo Alto University, Kara (grief support) and Asian Americans for Community Involvement (AACI) as community partners, collaborating with county and advocacy groups

Recent initiatives:

1. Culturally focused community panel events
2. Fall transition events for middle school and high school parents
3. Mental health education and stigma reduction programming
4. Media education events focused on local and regional media outlets regarding best practices in coverage of suicide related events



Grassroots Projects

- "Palo Alto Mental Health Dialogue" and "Success and Wellness: Life After PAUSD": PAUSD student alumni coordinated events addressing youth, families and partners focused on teen health, life balance and definitions of 'success' as young adults
- *Unmasked* – documentary by Palo Alto HS and Gunn HS students about growing up in Palo Alto, highlighting positive coping strategies
- Student initiated clubs focusing on mental health awareness and stigma reduction (Let's Bring Change to Mind)

Future Events

Focus groups (in process)

Convenience sample of middle and high school youth and their parents, including culturally specific groups, to discuss community's perception of current mental health needs and possible solutions

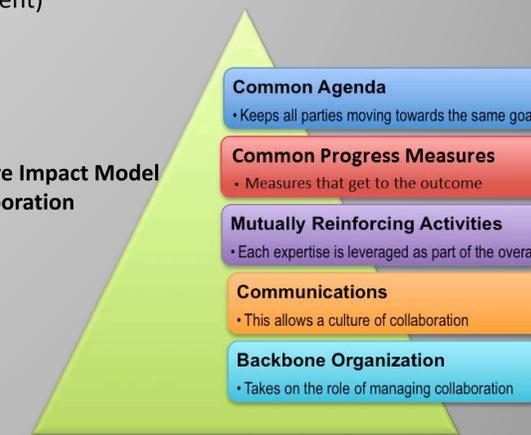
2016 Hackathon for Mental Health

Weekend-long community engagement event focused on high school and Stanford University students to collaborate on creating apps focused on mental health

2016 Adolescent Mental Health Conference

Educational and awareness event with broad audience including youth, parents/families, health care providers, and community partners (collaboration with Stanford Psychiatry Department)

Fig 2. Collective Impact Model of collaboration



<http://www.collaborationforimpact.com/collective-impact/>

Conclusion

- Selected postvention and prevention strategies are not included in this presentation because they were introduced in previous years.
- Project Safety Net has a longstanding community presence as the overall coordinator of prevention efforts, and has transitioned to a Collective Impact model to maximize collaborative potential.
- Workgroups are being formed to oversee specific initiatives, for example addressing cultural specific educational needs and use of technology in suicide prevention.
- Anniversaries of completed suicides have highlighted need for ongoing mental health support for community and vigilance regarding those at risk.

References

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Programs for the prevention of suicide among adolescents and young adults; and Suicide contagion and the reporting of suicide: recommendations from a national workshop. MMWR 1994;43 (No. RR-6)
- Hacker K, Collins J, Gross Young L, Almeida S, Burke N. 2008. Coping with youth suicide and overdose: one community's efforts to investigate, intervene, and prevent suicide contagion. Crisis 29 (2): 86-95.
- Joshi S V, Hartley S N, Kessler M, Barstead M. 2015. School-based suicide prevention: content, process, and the role of trusted adults and peers. Child and adolescent psychiatric clinics of North America 24 (2): 353-370.
- Project Safety Net website psnpaloalto.com. Accessed October 19, 2015.
- HEARD Alliance website heardalliance.org. Accessed October 19, 2015.