

SIEC Alert #55, September 2004

National Suicide Prevention Strategies

Suicide: A World View

According to the World Health Organization (2002), suicide is a leading cause of death worldwide. Globally, an estimated 815,000 people died by suicide in 2000. This number translates into one suicide death every 40 seconds.

Each year, approximately 4,000 Canadians die by suicide (Canadian Association for Suicide Prevention, 2004).

The Beginning: International Support and Guidance

Suicide has been a long standing problem around the globe, and one that came to the attention of the United Nations (UN) and the World Health Organization (WHO) in the early 1990's. Few countries at that time had developed or adopted strategies to reduce the incidence and prevalence of suicide among their citizens.

In collaboration with Canadian specialist organizations, the UN and WHO brought together representatives from twelve nations in 1993. The objective of this meeting was to develop clear guidelines to be used by individual nations in formulating and implementing national suicide prevention strategies (United Nations, 1993: 3)

The following elements are recommended for inclusion in any national strategy:

- government policy
- supporting framework
- general goals
- measureable objectives
- identified mechanisms to carry out objectives
- evaluation

(United Nations, 1993: 15)

Many Nations Have Developed a Suicide Prevention Strategy

Country	Plan Date
Norway	1992
Finland	1993
Slovenia	1995 (proposed strategy)
Sweden	1995
France	1996/97
Australia	1997
Ireland	1998
New Zealand	1998
United States	2001
England	2002
Scotland	2002

(Centre for Suicide Prevention, 2004)

Although Canada has not yet adopted or implemented a national suicide prevention strategy, one is currently in development with the Canadian Association for Suicide Prevention taking a lead role. The proposed framework for a Canadian National Suicide Prevention Strategy is available at: www.suicideprevention.ca/

Commonalities Among National Strategies

Several common elements can be found in many of the national strategies:

- **Public Awareness** campaigns to increase awareness of suicide as a problem that is preventable; to develop broad-based support for prevention efforts; to reduce stigma.
- **Community Development** to support development and implementation of suicide prevention programs.
- **Access to Services** to improve services to suicidal people and their loved ones; to support service delivery effort through development of guidelines and linkages.
- **Media Education** to improve reporting and portrayals of suicide in the media.
- **Training** for caregivers to improve recognition of at-risk behaviour and delivery of effective treatments; incorporation of licensing standards for professional caregivers; development and promotion of effective clinical and professional practices.
- **Means Restriction** initiatives to reduce access to lethal means and methods of self-harm.
- **Research and Evaluation** to promote and support research; improve surveillance systems; to evaluate the effectiveness of new or existing suicide prevention interventions.

(Centre for Suicide Prevention, 2004)

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World Suicide Prevention Day

The International Association for Suicide Prevention (IASP) has designated September 10, 2004 as World Suicide Prevention Day.

Together, IASP and the World Health Organization invite governments, non-government organizations, local communities, clinics, researchers and volunteers to promote increased awareness about suicide and the many ways to help reduce suicide rates and decrease suicidal behaviours.

SIEC Resources

SIEC #980461

Beautrais, A., & Ministry of Health. (1998). *A Review of the Evidence: In Our Hands. The New Zealand Youth Suicide Prevention Strategy*. Wellington, NZ: Ministry of Health.

SIEC #960289

Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development. (1996). *Prevention of Suicide: Guidelines for the Formulation and Implementation of National Strategies*. New York: United Nations.

SIEC #030275

Department of Health. (2002). *National Suicide Prevention Strategy for England*. Retrieved April 14, 2004, from <http://www.dh.gov.uk/assetRoot/04/01/95/48/04019548.pdf>

SIEC #010333

Department of Health and Children. (1998). *Report of the National Task Force on Suicide*. Dublin, Ireland: Government of Ireland.

SIEC #990510

Grad, O. T. (Ed.). (1995). *How to Reduce Suicide in Slovenia? The Proposal of the National Programme for Suicide Prevention: National and International Perspectives*. Geneva, Switzerland: WHO – Regional Office for Europe.

SIEC #980457

Ministry of Health & Ministry of Maori Development. (1998). *Kia Piki Te Ora O Te Taitamariki: Strengthening Youth Wellbeing. New Zealand Youth Suicide Prevention Strategy*. Wellington, NZ: Author.

SIEC #930375

National Research and Development & Centre for Welfare and Health. (1993). *Suicide Can be Prevented: Fundamentals of a Target and Action Strategy*. Helsinki, Finland: Author.

SIEC #971035

Norwegian Board of Health (1995). *The National Plan for Suicide Prevention 1994-1998*. Oslo, Norway: Author.

SIEC #040092

Scottish Executive. (2002). *Choosing Life: A National Strategy and Action Plan to Prevent Suicide in Scotland*. Edinburgh, Scotland: Author.

SIEC #970569

The National Council for Suicide Prevention, The National Board of Health and Welfare, The National Institute of Public Health, & The Centre for Suicide Research and Prevention. (1995). *Support in Suicidal Crises: The Swedish National Programme to Develop Suicide Prevention*. Stockholm, Sweden: National Institute of Public Health.

SIEC #020199

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Public Health Services. (2001). *National Strategy for Suicide Prevention: Goals and Objectives for Action*. Rockville, MD: Author.

Additional Resources

Canadian Association for Suicide Prevention. (2004). *The CASP Blueprint for a Canadian National Suicide Prevention Strategy*. <http://www.suicideprevention.ca/>

World Health Organization. (2002). *Facts: Self-Directed Violence*. Retrieved August 23, 2004, from http://www.who.int/violence_injury_prevention/violence/global_campaign/en/selfdirectedviolfacts.pdf

International Association for Suicide Prevention: <http://www.med.uio.no/iasp/>

Interested in learning more about national suicide prevention strategies? Visit our website for a comprehensive summary:

www.suicideinfo.ca



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Alberta: \$6.00 per document (subsidized by Alberta Health and Wellness)
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