

Strength in Recovery:

Suicide Postvention Strategies
for Community Impact

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Objectives

- Define suicide postvention and its importance in prevention, focusing on its role in supporting communities
- Explore best practices in suicide postvention, including strategies and resources for support, reducing stigma, and fostering healing
- Identify and apply actionable postvention strategies that can be implemented within community settings to promote recovery, prevent further tragedies, and support long-term prevention efforts



Take Care

In this presentation, we will be talking about suicide and death by suicide.

You may experience emotions or reactions you were not expecting to feel today.

Please take care of yourself as needed.



Appropriate Language

Words to Use:

Died by suicide

Lost to

suicide
Ended one's

life

Words to Avoid:

Successful suicide

Completed

suicide
Committed

suicide





The “Cone of Silence”

Secrecy,
rumors, and
lack of support

Loss survivors
may feel isolated,
blamed.

People who are
vulnerable may
not seek support.

“Cone of silence”
around suicide is
reinforced

Reference: NAMI New Hampshire Connect Postvention



Leading Causes of Death

■ Unintentional Injury ■ Homicide ■ Suicide

	<1	1-4	5-9	10-14	15-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+	All Ages
1	Congenital Anomalies 4,005	Unintentional Injury 1,275	Unintentional Injury 684	Unintentional Injury 914	Unintentional Injury 14,126	Unintentional Injury 30,163	Unintentional Injury 36,159	Malignant Neoplasms 32,867	Malignant Neoplasms 101,714	Heart Disease 554,413	Heart Disease 680,981
2	Short Gestation 2,922	Congenital Anomalies 426	Malignant Neoplasms 387	Suicide 481	Suicide 5,936	Suicide 8,453	Heart Disease 11,528	Unintentional Injury 30,559	Heart Disease 79,726	Malignant Neoplasms 461,345	Malignant Neoplasms 613,352
3	Sids 1,445	Homicide 225	Congenital Anomalies 210	Malignant Neoplasms 463	Homicide 5,745	Homicide 5,828	Malignant Neoplasms 11,291	Heart Disease 30,430	Unintentional Injury 33,710	Cerebrovascular 140,813	Unintentional Injury 222,698
4	Unintentional Injury 1,291	Malignant Neoplasms 269	Homicide 187	Homicide 388	Malignant Neoplasms 1,463	Malignant Neoplasms 3,503	Suicide 8,833	Liver Disease 8,866	Diabetes Mellitus 15,958	Chronic Low. Respiratory Disease 125,603	Cerebrovascular 162,639
5	Maternal Pregnancy Comp. 1,141	Influenza & Pneumonia 142	Heart Disease 77	Congenital Anomalies 192	Heart Disease 835	Heart Disease 3,474	Liver Disease 5,013	Suicide 7,853	Chronic Low. Respiratory Disease 15,748	Alzheimer's Disease 112,548	Chronic Low. Respiratory Disease 145,357
6	Bacterial Sepsis 621	Heart Disease 131	Influenza & Pneumonia 67	Heart Disease 96	Congenital Anomalies 443	Liver Disease 1,626	Homicide 4,487	Diabetes Mellitus 6,653	Liver Disease 14,764	Unintentional Injury 73,804	Alzheimer's Disease 114,034
7	Placenta Cord Membranes 569	Septicemia 68	Septicemia 52	Cerebrovascular 66	Diabetes Mellitus 259	Diabetes Mellitus 1,110	Diabetes Mellitus 2,604	Cerebrovascular 5,364	Cerebrovascular 13,425	Diabetes Mellitus 68,550	Diabetes Mellitus 95,190
8	Respiratory Distress 449	Perinatal Period 54	Chronic Low. Respiratory Disease 46	Chronic Low. Respiratory Disease 58	Chronic Low. Respiratory Disease 219	Cerebrovascular 579	Cerebrovascular 2,057	Chronic Low. Respiratory Disease 2,641	Suicide 7,816	Nephritis 45,200	Nephritis 55,253
9	Intrauterine Hypoxia 365	Cerebrovascular 53	Cerebrovascular 37	Influenza & Pneumonia 48	Cerebrovascular 162	Complicated Pregnancy 522	Septicemia 987	Homicide 2,571	Nephritis 6,196	Covid-19 44,097	Liver Disease 52,222
10	Circulatory System Disease 356	Covid-19 44	Covid-19 26	Diabetes Mellitus 35	Influenza & Pneumonia 157	Influenza & Pneumonia 458	Influenza & Pneumonia 967	Nephritis 2,442	Septicemia 5,665	Parkinson's Disease 39,238	Covid-19 49,932



Suicide Deaths & Attempts



Over
49,000
people died by
suicide in 2023



1 death every
11 minutes

Many adults think about
suicide or attempt suicide

12.8 million
Seriously thought about suicide

3.7 million
Made a plan for suicide

1.5 million
Attempted suicide

Courtesy of CDC, 2025



Survivors of Suicide Loss

135 people are impacted from a single suicide death.

42% of U.S. adults know someone who has died by suicide.





Why is it important to provide support after a suicide loss?



The Werther Effect



Exposure to a suicide may influence others
to attempt suicide.

Knowing someone who died by suicide
is one of the most significant risk factors for suicide.

Teens and young adults
are more at risk for contagion.

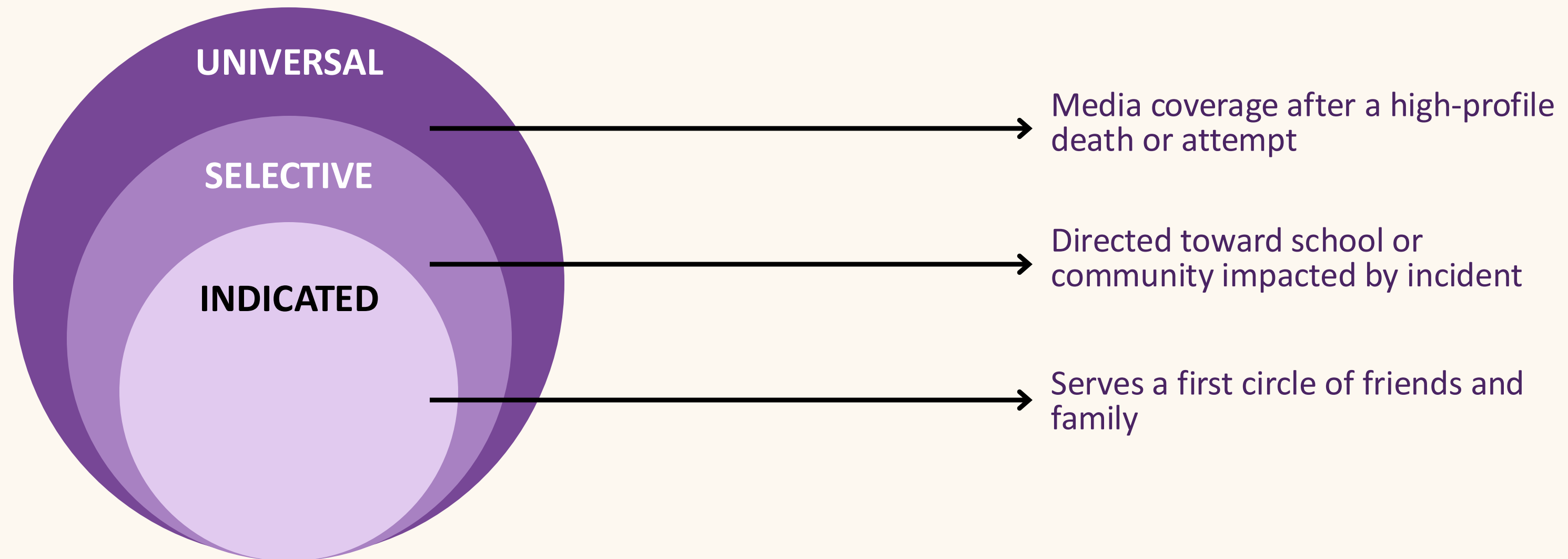
Sensational media reports
may contribute to contagion.

What is Suicide Postvention?

A planned response after a suicide death that helps with healing and reduces risk of further suicide incident



Postvention Response



Reference: NAMI New Hampshire Connect Postvention



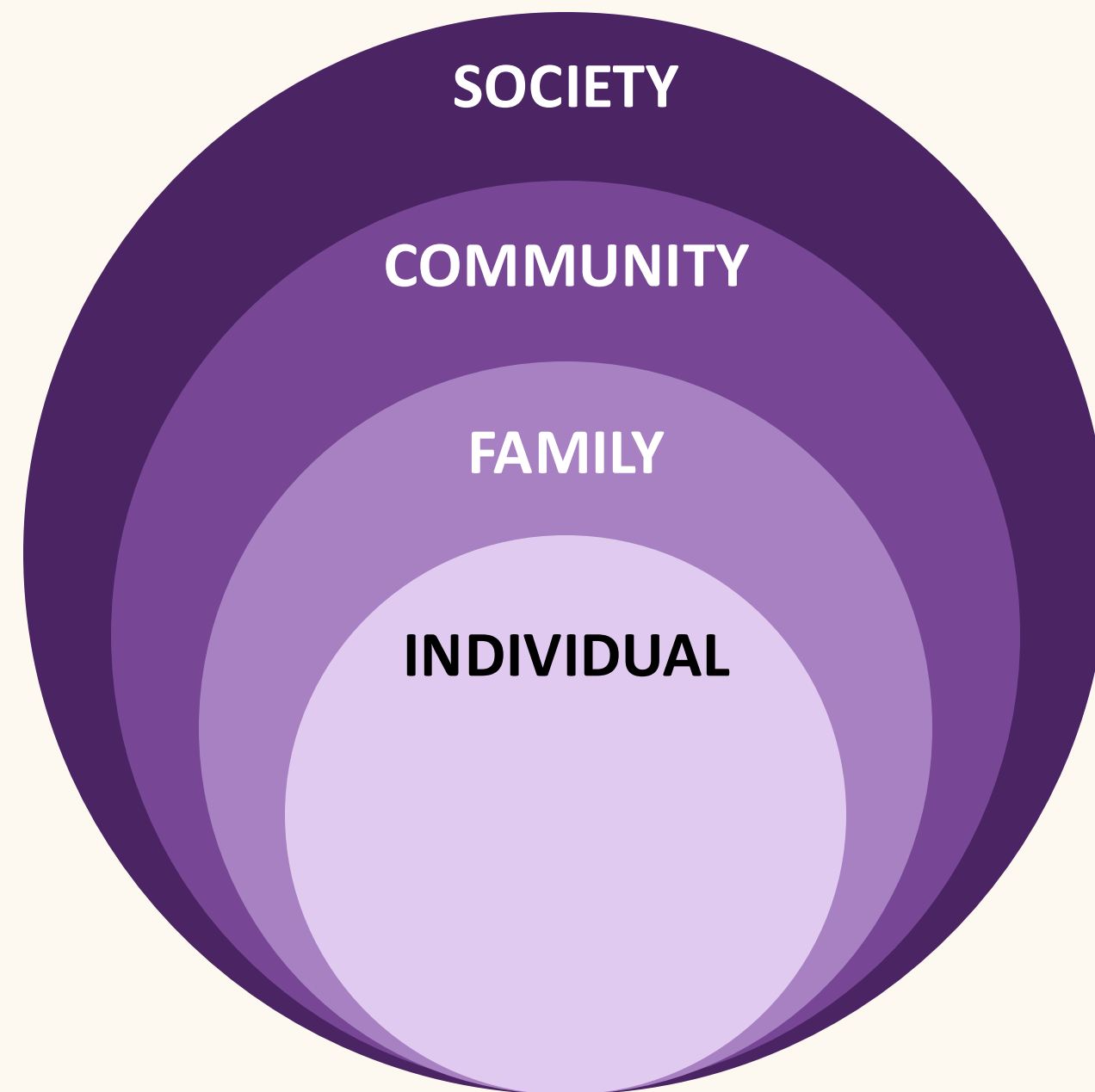
Go-Tos and Gaps

Which people, groups, or organizations are most important in responding to a suicide loss in your community?

Where do you see gaps or areas for improvement in your community's response to a suicide loss?



Social-Ecological Model



Individual

Recognize an increased risk for suicide in the days and weeks following a suicide death

Accept the intensity and extent of time for their feelings

Respect each individual's own healing process

Help them connect to a suicide survivors or bereavement group if this would be helpful

Help connect them to survivor outreach programs if this would be helpful



Individual

Tips for talking with Loss Survivors

Overcome our personal discomfort with death and suicide

Using the deceased person's name, if culturally appropriate, may comfort survivors

Don't feel like you need to provide an answer. Your presence alone will be reassuring

It's okay to use the word suicide, if it has been openly stated

Be gentle and nonjudgmental. Don't blame anyone

Acknowledging that the death is a suicide reduces stigma, promotes healing, and minimizes risk.



Family

Understand that
grief is complex

Encourage them
to accept help

Provide support and
care on anniversaries,
holidays, etc.

**It is never too late to call, send a card, offer
help, or ask for help.**



Community

Good networking and collaboration among community agencies is key to promote healing

Identify those with a close relationship to the deceased

Identify others at a higher risk of suicide who may need extra support at this time

Be sensitive to those responding and supporting the community



Society

Safe Messaging

Stigma Reduction

Resource Sharing

Education & Training



Safe Messaging

Promote

- Information on getting help
 - 988 Suicide/Crisis Lifeline
 - 211 Community Services Link
- Warning signs for suicide
- Early help for mental health and substance misuse
- Local efforts to prevent suicide
- Appropriate language
 - “Died by suicide”

Avoid

- Personal details
- Detailed descriptions
- Glorifying people who have died by suicide
- Normalizing suicide as a common event
- Oversimplifying the cause of suicide
 - Can create a sense of hopelessness



Small Group Share

Take a minute to think about a recent or hypothetical suicide loss.

How might different levels of support: individual, relationships, community, and societal, play a role in supporting those affected?



Getting Started with Community Postvention Planning



Reference: Utah Suicide Prevention Coalition Community Postvention Toolkit

- Select a postvention response coordinator
- Form a postvention response team with essential members
- Develop a postvention response plan with community partners
- Activate the community postvention response

Identify Postvention Coordinator

Consider starting with your local health department

Flexibility to divert job responsibilities to postvention when suicide occurs

Training and expertise

Knowledge of community services and resources

Ability to navigate and coordinate partner organizations and systems



Form a Postvention Committee



Reference: Utah Suicide Prevention Coalition Community
Postvention Toolkit

Key Partners:

- Health Department
- Mental Health Organization(s)
- School District
- Law Enforcement
- Organizations That Serve Vulnerable Populations
- City or Town Leaders
- Faith Leaders
- Healthcare Leaders
- Crisis Response Leaders
- Suicide Loss Survivors
- Public Information Officer
- Someone willing to serve in the role of family liaison

Components of a Postvention Response Plan

**Defined goals of the
plan**

**Strategies for supporting community
at each level of response**

**List of committee members &
contact information**

**List of possible response team members,
roles, and contact information**

**Protocols for plan activation,
implementation, and deactivation**



Components of a Postvention Response Plan Continued



Reference: Utah Suicide Prevention Coalition Community
Postvention Toolkit

Communication Protocols

Procedures for working with the
media and monitoring social media

Considerations for handling
milestones

Considerations for special populations

A training plan for postvention
committee and response team.

Activating the Plan

Considerations

Response is especially important in small, tight-knit communities

Some responses may require more resources for a longer period of time, like the death of a well-known individual

One death should not be treated as “more tragic” than others

Consulting the Family

It is appropriate and necessary to consult with the family regarding a response plan

Provide education around safe messaging if needed



First 24-72 Hours

- Connect with family to ensure immediate needs are met
 - Determine if other resources are needed like clergy, counseling, childcare, etc.
- Identify other community members and groups who may be directly impacted by the death
 - If appropriate, the postvention response team can assist in notifying these groups
- Offer support and encourage safe messaging around the death by suicide



First Week

- Maintain communication with family to address needs and provide support
- Monitor any community events, memorials, media coverage etc. related to the death
 - Ensure media is following safe messaging protocols
- It is appropriate for postvention response team members to attend a memorial or vigil to be available for support
- The postvention response team should meet to debrief and see how to adjust their approach moving forward
 - This is also a time to provide support to team members



First Month

- Maintain regular communication with immediate family members and affected organizations (such as the school district) to evaluate ongoing needs
- Communicate needs to the response team
- Monitor community events, public memorials, and media coverage of the death



Ongoing Support

- Refer individuals that require additional services to local mental healthcare providers
- Provide resources for grief support



Deactivation & Debrief

- The postvention response committee can deactivate the plan when there are no longer immediate needs in the community
- Postvention Response Team should debrief after plan is deactivated
 - What worked, what did not, any changes for future response
 - Designate team members to check in with family and friends at milestones



Small Group Discussion

- Where is our community right now with postvention? What strengths do we already have in place?
- What postvention resources do we have or know about?
- What gaps or challenges do we see in our current approach?
- What is one concrete step our community can take to strengthen postvention efforts moving forward?



Self-Care

Talk openly about self-care, model self-care for others, and encourage others to practice self-care

The healing process can take months and years, and people grieve and process it in different ways

It is essential to take care of yourself before taking care of others



National Resources

- 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline (call, text, or chat 24/7) press 1 for veterans
- Crisis Text Line: Text NAMI to 741741
- Mental Health America: mhanational.org
- NAMI Kansas: namikansas.org
- Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention: actionallianceforsuicideprevention.org
- American Association of Suicidology: suicidology.org
- American Foundation for Suicide Prevention: afsp.org
- Suicide Awareness Voices of Education: save.org
- Suicide Prevention Resource Center: sprc.org
- Utah Suicide Prevention Coalition Postvention Toolkit



Grief/Loss Resources

- The Connect Program: theconnectprogram.org
- American School Counselors Association: schoolcounselor.org
- Center for Grieving Children (Maine): cgcmaine.org
- Dougy Center (Oregon): dougy.org
- National Association of School Psychologists: nasponline.org
- National Alliance for Grieving Children: childrengrieve.org
- National Center for School Crisis and Bereavement: schoolcrisiscenter.org
- National Child Traumatic Stress Network: nctsn.org
- What's Your Grief: whatsyourgrief.com
- (Military Resource) Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors: taps.org

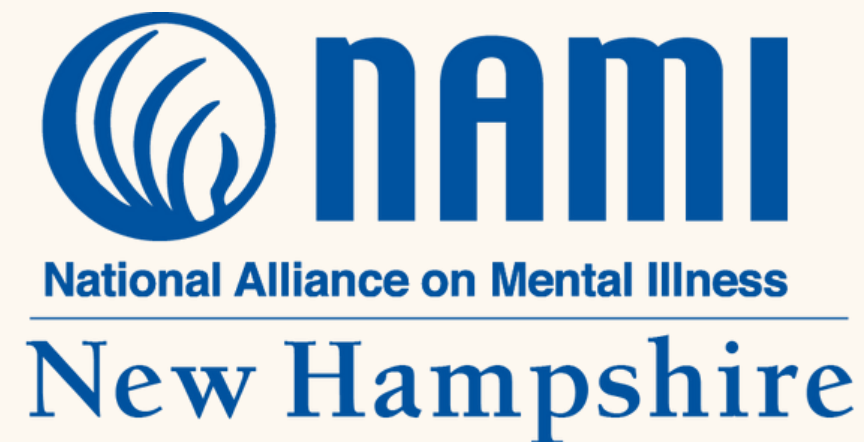


Kansas Resources

- DCCCA: dccca.org
- Kansas Suicide Prevention Coalition: kansassuicidepreventioncoalition.org
- Lemon-Aid: sixftover.org/lemon-aid
- Headquarters Kansas: hqkansas.org
- The Kansas Suicide Prevention, Intervention, Reintegration and Postvention Toolkit (Kansas State Department of Education)



Want A More In-Depth Training?



We have been trained as trainers by NAMI New Hampshire to facilitate Postvention: A Community Response after a Sudden Death or Suicide; A Connect Training for Individual, Family, and Community Healing. We'll come to you!



Feedback





DCCCA
IMPROVING LIVES

THANK
YOU

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