



Lifelines

Program Description

Lifelines is a school-based suicide prevention curriculum comprised of four 45-minute lessons. Lesson content includes:

1. Information and attitudes about suicide, help seeking, and school resources;
2. A discussion of warning signs of suicide and role-playing exercises for students who may encounter a suicidal peer, (including an emphasis on seeking adult help); and,
3. Two videos: one that depicts appropriate and inappropriate responses to a suicidal peer, and one that documents an actual response of 3 eighth-grade boys to a suicidal peer after they had participated in Lifelines.

The program also includes school-based model policies and procedures for responding to at-risk youth, suicide attempts, and completions; presentations for educators and parents; and a one-day workshop to train teachers to provide the curriculum.

Evaluation Design and Outcomes

Lifelines curriculum was evaluated utilizing a Solomon four-group design (Kalafat & Elias, 1994). This design was particularly strong because it allowed for the examination of pretest as well as program effects. The Lifelines curriculum was given to the experimental group during a required health class (the control group attended a PE class; they received Lifelines instruction the following semester). A total of 253 10th-grade students from two suburban schools participated in the study. Students were not randomly assigned to the health and PE classes; however, an examination of pretest scores indicated no statistically significant differences in the two groups.

Four outcomes were studied: knowledge about suicide, attitudes toward suicide, responses toward suicidal peers, and satisfaction with the suicide class. Lifelines students demonstrated significantly greater knowledge about suicide when compared with control group students. Lifelines students also demonstrated increased positive attitudes towards suicide prevention, especially attitudes related to help-seeking behavior. To assess student response to suicidal peers, students were asked to evaluate how they would respond to a possibly suicidal peer and to a clearly suicidal peer. In both cases, Lifelines students responded more appropriately than control group students. No pretesting effects were found for any of these outcomes: the fact that the students completed a pretest did not impact their scores on the posttest. Students also rated the Lifelines curriculum more favorably than their regular health class curriculum.

SPRC Classification

Promising

Program Characteristics
Intervention Type School-Based
Target Age 12-17
Gender Female & Male
Ethnicity Multiple
IOM Category Universal Selective Indicated

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Generalizability

The Lifelines curriculum was studied in two suburban, middle-class schools in the Northeast. Fifty-seven percent of participants were male; the authors found no gender-based differences although they suggest further research is needed in this area. A breakdown of participant ethnicity was not included in the evaluation.

Implementation Essentials

To ensure that the school environment is prepared for increased help-seeking by students, appropriate suicide prevention education must be provided to school personnel.

Targeted Protective and Risk Factors

Lifelines impacts the following risk and protective factors that have been targeted by the *National Strategy for Suicide Prevention* for the reduction of suicide in the United States.

Increased Protective Factors

Easy access to a variety of clinical interventions
and support for help-seeking
Strong connections to family and community
support

Decreased Risk Factors

Stigma associated with help-seeking behavior

Program Costs

Implementation costs will vary depending upon the number of teachers and staff-members trained. The Lifelines curriculum manual, which is available directly from the developer, costs \$40.

Program Contact Information

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References

Kalafat, J., and Elias, M. (1994). An evaluation of a school-based suicide awareness intervention. *Suicide and Life-Threatening Behavior*, 24(3), 224-233.