

# SUICIDE-SAFER COMMUNITIES: A DESIGNATION RECOGNIZING COMMUNITY COMMITMENTS TO SUICIDE-SAFETY

*Building on the pioneering work of the Safe Communities injury prevention movement, LivingWorks Education developed the Suicide-Safer Communities designation over several years and launched it in 2015. The designation celebrates and acknowledges those communities who have made significant progress in reaching the suicide-safer goals reflected in their national and local suicide prevention strategies.*

## What is a suicide-safer community?

Suicide prevention is everybody's business. Communities dedicated to suicide-safer initiatives acknowledge their responsibility to ensure that citizens coping with personal distress or other contributors to thoughts of suicide will have access to life-saving supports and resources.

A Suicide-Safer Community develops sustainable coordinated and collaborative approaches to suicide awareness, prevention, intervention, post-intervention, and postvention. To be recognized as a Suicide-Safer Community, there are ten main pillars of community action to address. These pillars are associated with most national suicide prevention strategies. Communities can assess their progression and current strengths, as well as areas for growth and improvement, as they work within their own national and local frameworks to become safer from suicide.

## How do communities earn the designation?

The ten pillars align with elements of most national suicide prevention strategies around the world. These elements provide a roadmap for a diverse cross-section of community leaders and members to develop, coordinate, and implement approaches and actions that are tailored for their community. Once communities have committed to address their national and/or local suicide prevention strategies in collaborative and sustainable ways, they are invited to submit a letter of intent to seek the

designation. When they are ready, this letter is followed by a completed Suicide-Safer Community application. All applications are reviewed by a panel experienced in suicide prevention, including leaders from LivingWorks Education and allied organizations in the country of the applicant.

## Why become designated?

A Suicide-Safer Community designation recognizes a community for its leadership in formulating and implementing sustainable suicide prevention approaches. The designation celebrates caring and collaboration. It honors a community's ongoing efforts in building capacity for hopeful, life-affirming living environments and proclaims this excellent work to all those in the community and beyond.

Once granted, the Suicide-Safer Community designation remains current for five years. To apply or learn more about the Suicide-Safer Communities initiative, visit [www.livingworks.net/community](http://www.livingworks.net/community).

It is time to recognize the commitments, innovations and accomplishments of your community



# THE TEN PILLARS OF A SUICIDE-SAFER COMMUNITY

*Suicide-safer communities build capacity to address these ten pillars in ways that incorporate helping practitioners, researchers, community-based services, the bereaved, and those with lived experience of suicide.*

*The ten pillars in this designation reflect core elements of suicide prevention strategies around the world.*

## 1. Leadership / Steering Committee

A leadership/steering committee guides the community's goals and implementation of a local, regional, national, or international strategy/framework/declaration indicating that suicide is a serious public health problem. The committee shall include key leaders representing the diversity of the community in addressing the other 9 pillars. Multi-sectoral membership includes key community stakeholders and representatives relevant to various demographics and areas of interest (i.e.: first responders, justice system, healthcare, education, policy makers, public and private sectors, faith communities, lived experience, media, etc).

## 2. Community Needs Assessment and Action Plan

A data informed summary of the scope of the problem of suicide within the community which led to the need for establishing a strategy/action plan. In addition, describe the Action Plan including clearly identified goals, objectives and targets tailored to address the identified community needs.

## 3. Mental Health and Wellness Promotion

Mental health promotion is defined by the World Health Organization as the creation of living conditions and environments that support mental health and allow people to adopt and maintain healthy lifestyles.

## 4. Suicide Prevention Awareness

Primary prevention education and awareness campaigns/activities with a demonstrated impact on raising public awareness, improving community attitudes, and increasing public dialogue on suicide.

## 5. Training

Training is defined as the intent to increase awareness of individual and community norms and attitudes which impact the ability to intervene and support those with suicidal experiences. Training should also address the development of skills, knowledge, and competencies of community members, laypersons, and professionals in the areas of suicide: prevention, intervention, post-intervention, and postvention.

## 6. Suicide Intervention Services

Suicide intervention services provide early or immediate response to those individuals experiencing suicide with the intended service outcome of safety. Effective suicide intervention services provide a range of options depending on the severity of the situation, use evidence-based programs and processes, align with other suicide prevention efforts, create internal and external organizational linkages for collaboration and continuity of care, and incorporate data-gathering tools for measurable outcomes.

## 7. Clinical and Support Services

Collaborations and partnerships of the clinical and support services created and sustained to ensure greater access to services along the continuum of awareness, prevention, intervention, post-intervention and postvention.

## 8. Suicide Bereavement

Resources and supports available to people bereaved and affected by suicide.

## 9. Evaluation and Dissemination

Data collection, evaluation, systems to track progress and sharing of findings with relevant audiences in a timely, unbiased, consistent manner for each of the services provided across all of the pillars.

## 10. Capacity Building and Sustainability

Community capacity is defined as "the combined influence of a community's commitment, resources, and skills that can be deployed to build on community strengths and address community problems."<sup>1</sup> Sustainability occurs when the formal and informal processes, systems, structures, and relationships actively support the capacity to create suicide safer communities.

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<sup>1</sup> Adapted from Building Community Capacity: The Potential of Community Foundations, by Steven E. Mayer. Published by Rainbow Research, Inc., 1995