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# Asking About Suicide: ASIST training in Ireland

National Forum

National Office for Suicide Prevention

March 22, 2007

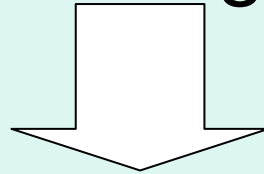
Anne Callanan



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# Issues Around Suicide

- Ambivalence
- Express ideas and plan
- Fear of asking the question



- How can we support suicide prevention by considering these issues?



# ASIST

## ASIST Training

- Two-day intensive, interactive workshop in suicide first-aid
- Designed to help all caregivers become:
  - More ready
  - More willing
  - More able to help persons at risk



# Aim of ASIST

To enhance a caregiver's abilities to assist a person at risk to avoid suicide

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# ASIST

## Components of ASIST

Preparing

Sets the tone, norms  
and expectations of  
training



# ASIST

Connecting

Recognise that caregivers and persons at risk are affected by personal and societal attitudes about suicide.



# ASIST



Understanding

Overview the  
intervention needs of  
the person at risk.  
Identify risk alerts and  
develop safeplans  
related to them.

# ASIST

Assisting

Presents a model for effective suicide prevention.

Equipped with skills to intervene with a person at risk of suicide.



# ASIST

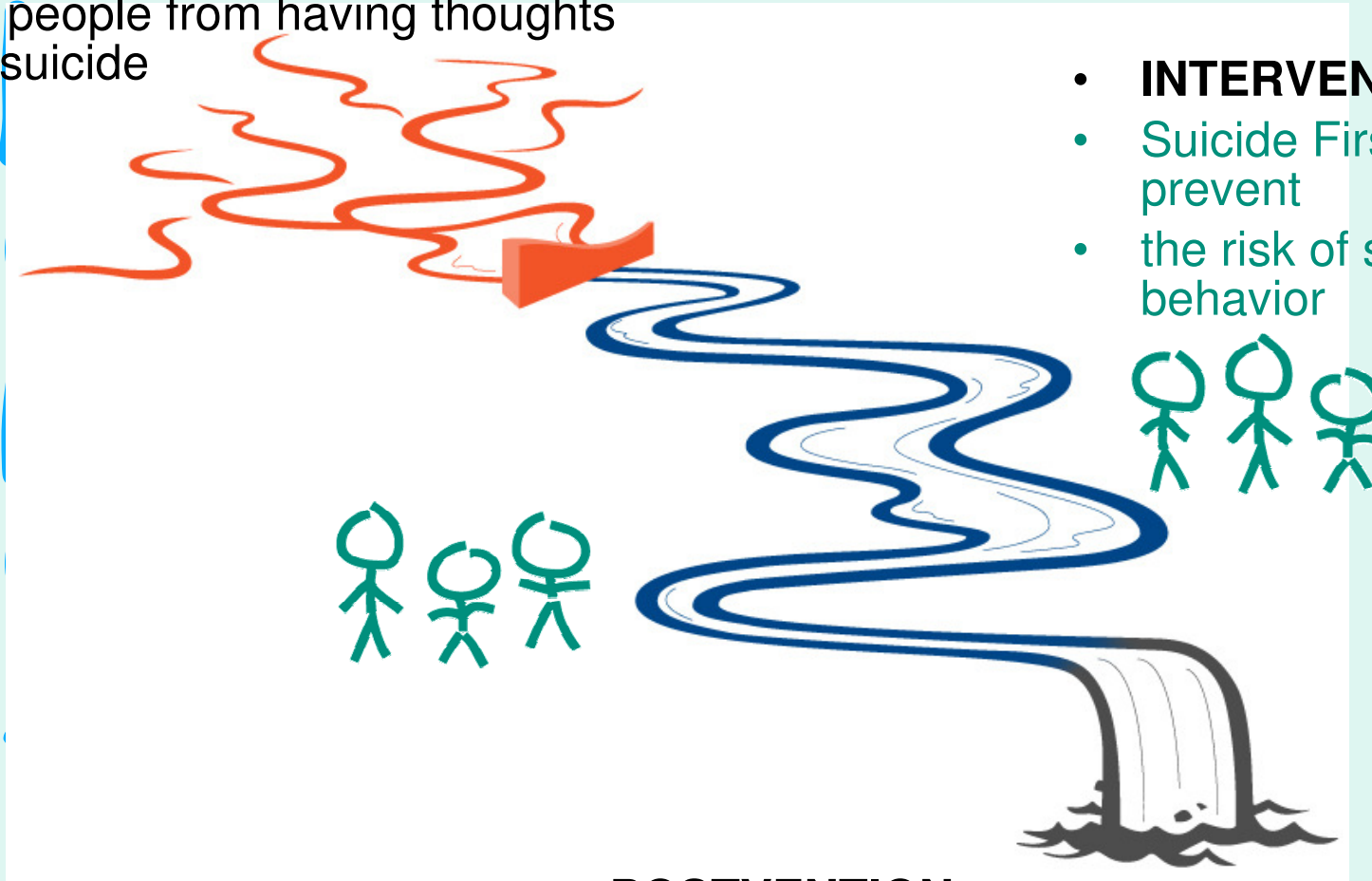
Networking

Generates information about local resources available to person at risk, including themselves



## • PREVENTION

- Important but unlikely to prevent all people from having thoughts of suicide



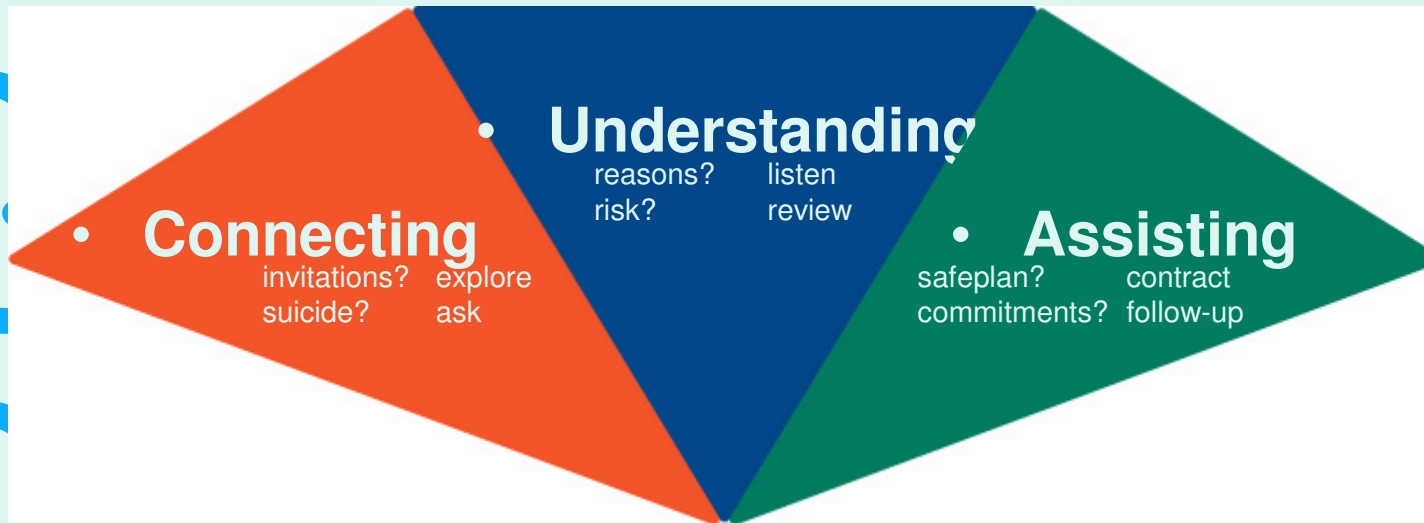
- **INTERVENTION**
- Suicide First-Aid to prevent
- the risk of suicidal behavior

- **POSTVENTION**
- For those who injure themselves
- and those who are affected



# Structure of the Suicide Intervention Model

A.S.T.S.T



- Connecting → Invitations – explore  
Suicide? – ask
- Understanding → Reasons? – ask  
→ Risk? – Review
- Assisting → Safeplan? – contract  
→ Commitments? – follow-up



# ASIST

## Who is it for?

- Health professionals
- Mental health professionals
- Educators
- Community gatekeepers
- Youth workers
- Parents
- Clergy
- Gardaí
- Community volunteers
- Excluded
  - Recently bereaved
  - Emotionally vulnerable
  - Under 18s
  - No previous experience with mental health training



# ASIST

## ASIST in Ireland

- June 07: 4<sup>th</sup> T4T
- Approx. 100 trainers in 12 local coordinating sites
- National network
- Team of Consulting Trainers
- c.5000 participants



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# Trainers' Agencies

- HSE
- Aware
- Console
- Living Links
- Mental Health Ireland
- National Assoc. for the Deaf
- National Youth Health Programme
- North Inner City Drugs Task Force / Saol
- RehabCare
- Schizophrenia Ireland
- St Angela's College, Sligo



# ASIST

## Participants

- Nurses
- Gardaí
- Teachers
- Social workers
- Psychologists
- Psychotherapists
- Addiction counsellors
- Psychiatrists
- Coast guards
- CIC workers
- Parents
- County council staff
- Clergy
- Probation officers
- Community development workers
- Doctors
- Juvenile liaison officers
- Outreach workers
- Vets
- Holistic therapists
- ...and more



# Organisations

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- Asylum seekers services
- Travellers groups
- Youth organisations
- National Learning Network
- Universities, agricultural colleges
- Justice: Probation service, Garda Siochana, defence forces
- Community
- Irish Advocacy Network
- GAA
- Brothers of Charity and other
- Bereavement services
- GLEN
- Mental health voluntary agencies
- AIDS Alliance
- Domestic violence agencies
- Alcohol abuse services
- Homeless organisations
- Order of Malta
- ICA
- Macra
- Rape Crisis Centre
- ...and more



# Sustaining Benefits into Future

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1. Coordination of Workshops
  - Multi-organisational
  - Multidisciplinary
  - Pre-informed of content and delivery
  - Personal readiness of participants



# Sustaining Benefits into Future

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## 2. Support for Trainers

- Coordinator
- Debriefing
- National network of trainers
- Consulting trainers
- Supervision
- Maximum no. of workshops per year



# Sustaining Benefits into Future

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## 3. Support for Participants

- Trainers
- Local network from participant group
- Counselling



# Sustaining Benefits into Future

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## 4. National Network

- Annual meetings
  - Address specific aspects of workshop
  - Discuss experiences of being a trainer
- Share trainers across sites
- Consulting trainers
  - Individual and group support



# Where Does ASIST Fit?

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**General Awareness  
Community Gatekeeper**

General population  
Interest in suicide issues

**SafeTALK**

Interested in asking  
about suicide

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Caregivers seeking  
intervention skills

**STORM**

Front line workers



**National Training Programme for Suicide Prevention**

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# Role of NOSP

- National coordinators
  - National planning e.g. T4T
  - National network
  - Liase with coordinators
- Support coordinators
  - Guidelines for coordination
  - Financial aid
- Collation and dissemination of information



# ASIST

## Find out more

- [www.livingworkseducation.com](http://www.livingworkseducation.com)
  - Information on programme and other training
- [www.nosp.ie](http://www.nosp.ie)
  - List of regional coordinators

