



# Training the community to recognise and respond to suicidality

## Why include this strategy in LifeSpan?

Gatekeepers are individuals most likely to come into contact with people at risk of suicide and who are therefore in the best position to intervene. "Gatekeeper training" aims to equip these people with the skills to identify, recognise and respond to those at risk and assist them to seek appropriate help.

Gatekeeper training has been recommended by the United Nations, the World Health Organization, and the existing academic literature as one of the most promising strategies for preventing suicide<sup>1,2</sup>. Although there is little direct evidence that gatekeeper training can lead to decreases in suicidal behaviour, evidence shows that gatekeeper training can increase awareness of suicide risk factors, and improve suicide prevention skills, suicide knowledge, and attitudes towards people with suicidal thoughts and behaviours<sup>3-8</sup>.

## Evidence supporting recommended interventions in LifeSpan

LifeSpan has endorsed "Question, Persuade, Refer (QPR)" as the key gatekeeper training program. QPR is one of the most commonly used commercially available gatekeeper training programs. It has been found to have positive effects in a wide variety of populations such as school staff<sup>9</sup>, university students and staff<sup>10</sup>, youth workers<sup>11</sup> and non-clinical hospital staff<sup>12</sup>. QPR can be delivered either online (takes approximately 60 minutes) or in a face-to-face format (approximately 2-3 hours). Results across the different formats are comparable in terms of increasing knowledge about suicide and suicide prevention, self-efficacy for suicide prevention, and behavioural intentions to engage in suicide prevention<sup>6</sup>. From a feasibility perspective, QPR online provides an opportunity to deliver training to a wide range of community members in a highly cost-effective manner.

## What is happening in LifeSpan NSW trial sites?

Black Dog Institute has established a partnership with the QPR Institute to adapt QPR online for an Australian context and make it available to LifeSpan sites at a reduced cost. LifeSpan is also endorsing LivingWorks' Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST). ASIST is delivered over a two-day face-to-face workshop. Studies on ASIST have shown increases in knowledge about suicide, gatekeeper preparedness and self-efficacy in providing help, number of at-risk youth referred, and frequency of asking about distress/suicide<sup>13-15</sup>.

## How will this be evaluated in LifeSpan?

The effectiveness of gatekeeper training is being evaluated as part of the LifeSpan Suicide Prevention Training Study. Surveys will be distributed pre-training, post-training and at six-month follow up. The surveys will examine knowledge of suicide, attitudes towards suicide and help-seeking, confidence in helping, and actual helping behaviours.

To find out how to make a difference, please contact us at: [info@suicidepreventioncentralcoast.org.au](mailto:info@suicidepreventioncentralcoast.org.au)



## Key References

Quinnett, P. (2007). QPR gatekeeper training for suicide prevention: The model, rationale and theory. QPR Institute.

Rodgers, Philip L. (2010). Review of the Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training Program (ASIST): Rationale, evaluation results, and directions for future research. LivingWorks Education Incorporated.

For more detailed information on the evidence underpinning LifeSpan and the NSW research trial visit [www.lifespan.org.au](http://www.lifespan.org.au)

1. Mann JJ, Apter A, Bertolote J, et al. Suicide prevention strategies: a systematic review. *Jama*. 2005;294(16):2064-2074.
2. Krysinska K, Batterham PJ, Tye M, et al. Best strategies for reducing the suicide rate in Australia. *Australian & New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry*. 2016;50(2):115-118.
3. Isaac M, Elias B, Katz LY, et al. Gatekeeper training as a preventative intervention for suicide: a systematic review. *The Canadian Journal of Psychiatry*. 2009;54(4):260-268.
4. Ghoncheh R, Gould MS, Twisk JW, Kerkhof AJ, Koot HM. Efficacy of adolescent suicide prevention e-learning modules for gatekeepers: a randomized controlled trial. *JMIR mental health*. 2016;3(1).
5. Jacobson JM, Osteen PJ, Sharpe TL, Pastoor JB. Randomized trial of suicide gatekeeper training for social work students. *Research on Social Work Practice*. 2012;22(3):270-281.
6. Lancaster PG, Moore JT, Putter SE, et al. Feasibility of a web based gatekeeper training: Implications for suicide prevention. *Suicide and life-threatening behavior*. 2014;44(5):510-523.
7. Tsai WP, Lin LY, Chang HC, Yu LS, Chou MC. The Effects of the Gatekeeper Suicide Awareness Program for Nursing Personnel. *Perspectives in psychiatric care*. 2011;47(3):117-125.
8. Wu CY, Lin YY, Yeh MC, et al. Effectiveness of interactive discussion group in suicide risk assessment among general nurses in Taiwan: a randomized controlled trial. *Nurse education today*. 2014;34(11):1388-1394.
9. Tompkins TL, Witt J, Abraibesh N. Does a gatekeeper suicide prevention program work in a school setting? Evaluating training outcome and moderators of effectiveness. *Suicide and life-threatening behavior*. 2010;40(5):506-515.
10. Indelicato NA, Mirsu-Paun A, Griffin WD. Outcomes of a suicide prevention gatekeeper training on a university campus. *Journal of College Student Development*. 2011;52(3):350-361.
11. Keller DP, Schut LJA, Puddy RW, et al. Tennessee Lives Count: Statewide gatekeeper training for youth suicide prevention. *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice*. 2009;40(2):126.
12. Cross W, Matthieu MM, Cerel J, Knox KL. Proximate outcomes of gatekeeper training for suicide prevention in the workplace. *Suicide and Life-Threatening Behavior*. 2007;37(6):659-670.
13. Coleman D, Del Quest A. Science from evaluation: testing hypotheses about differential effects of three youth-focused suicide prevention trainings. *Social work in public health*. 2015;30(2):117-128.
14. Smith AR, Silva C, Covington DW, Joiner Jr TE. An assessment of suicide-related knowledge and skills among health professionals. *Health Psychology*. 2014;33(2):110.
15. Cwik MF, Tingey L, Wilkinson R, Goklish N, Larzelere-Hinton F, Barlow A. Suicide prevention gatekeeper training: can they advance prevention in Indian country? *Archives of suicide research*. 2016;20(3):402-411.

To find out how to make a difference, please contact us at: [info@suicidepreventioncentralcoast.org.au](mailto:info@suicidepreventioncentralcoast.org.au)