



Engaging the community and providing opportunities to be part of the change

Why include this strategy in LifeSpan?

Community awareness campaigns aim to prevent suicide through targeting the general public to improve understanding of suicide and mental health problems, decrease stigma towards suicide and increase help-seeking behaviours. Such campaigns often include the use of mass media to promote key messages, such as television or radio advertisements, distribution of flyers, and newspaper articles.

Evidence supporting recommended interventions in LifeSpan

Community campaigns have been found to positively impact awareness, knowledge and attitudes towards suicide¹⁻³ but have not been shown to influence suicide deaths or attempts. To enhance their impact, it has been recommended that they be implemented as part of a wider, multifaceted suicide prevention program, and that they seek to actively engage the community, rather than rely on passive exposure¹.

What is happening in LifeSpan NSW trial sites?

LifeSpan trial sites will partner with an existing established community campaign (LifeSpan recommends R U OK? due to their recognisability as a brand in Australia) to build on their messaging, activities and materials. The aim of the community campaign will be to promote LifeSpan interventions, provide information about local help-seeking resources, and encourage people to become involved in suicide prevention (such as participating in gatekeeper training or the LifeSpan Champions program).

Trial sites can also plan separate events and promotional activities around major suicide prevention events such as World Suicide Prevention Day. The specific activities and content of the community campaign will be decided based on each trial site's needs and resources.

How will this be evaluated in LifeSpan?

This strategy will not be tied to a specific study. However, as an overall evaluation of LifeSpan's secondary outcomes, the LifeSpan Community Survey will assess community-level outcomes such as suicidal thoughts, psychological distress, knowledge of and attitudes towards suicide, and help-seeking behaviours.

Key References

Torok, M., Calear, A., Shand, F., Christensen, H. (2016). A systematic review of mass media campaigns for suicide prevention: understanding their efficacy and the mechanisms needed for successful behavioral and literacy change. *Suicide and life-threatening behavior*.

<https://www.ruok.org.au/get-involved>

For more detailed information on the evidence underpinning LifeSpan and the NSW research trial visit www.lifespan.org.au

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