

# Postvention is prevention:

After suicide response in Lewis and Clark County



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**TEAM**  
OF LEWIS & CLARK  
COUNTY AREA

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**2/1/22**

# Demonstration of need

Yearly Death Summary by Manner of Death

| YEAR | Natural | Accident | Suicide | Homicide | Undetermined | Traffic Crash |
|------|---------|----------|---------|----------|--------------|---------------|
| 2017 | 403     | 24       | 19      | 3        | 4            | 12            |
| 2018 | 400     | 23       | 22      | 6        | 6            | 7             |
| 2019 | 463     | 32       | 12      | 2        | 3            | 2             |
| 2020 | 542     | 18       | 20      | 1        | 3            | 3             |

- For every suicide it is estimated that 147 people exposed, but there are indications this can be 400+ people depending on the individual who passed.
  - Six closest to the individual are most likely to experience major life disruption
  - 3X increased suicide risk for loss survivors
- Situations involving suicide contagion do occur in county – youth suicides and among family members
- Montana suicide rate is nearly twice as high as the national average at 26.2 per 100,000 people; 289 suicides a year

# Challenges for loss survivors

- Intense emotional pain, the ever-present “Why?”
- Common feelings of anger, shame, grief, confusion
- Stigma, stigma, stigma
- Unawareness of available services – generally takes up to 4.5 years to access appropriate resources
- Increased likelihood of developing Complicated Grief (CG)/ Prolonged Grief Disorder (listed in DSM-5)



# Prolonged Grief Disorder

- Distinct from depression, prolonged grief is marked by a pervasive yearning for the deceased. It is most common among people who have lost a child or a romantic partner and is more likely to occur after sudden or violent deaths, such as deaths by homicide, suicide or accident
- Without treatment, the condition can persist indefinitely, leading to problems such as substance abuse, suicidal thinking, sleep disturbances and impaired immune function
- ~ 40 – 80 % of loss survivors likely to experience PDG/ CG

Source: American Psychological Association; Stahl's Handbook Suicide Prevention

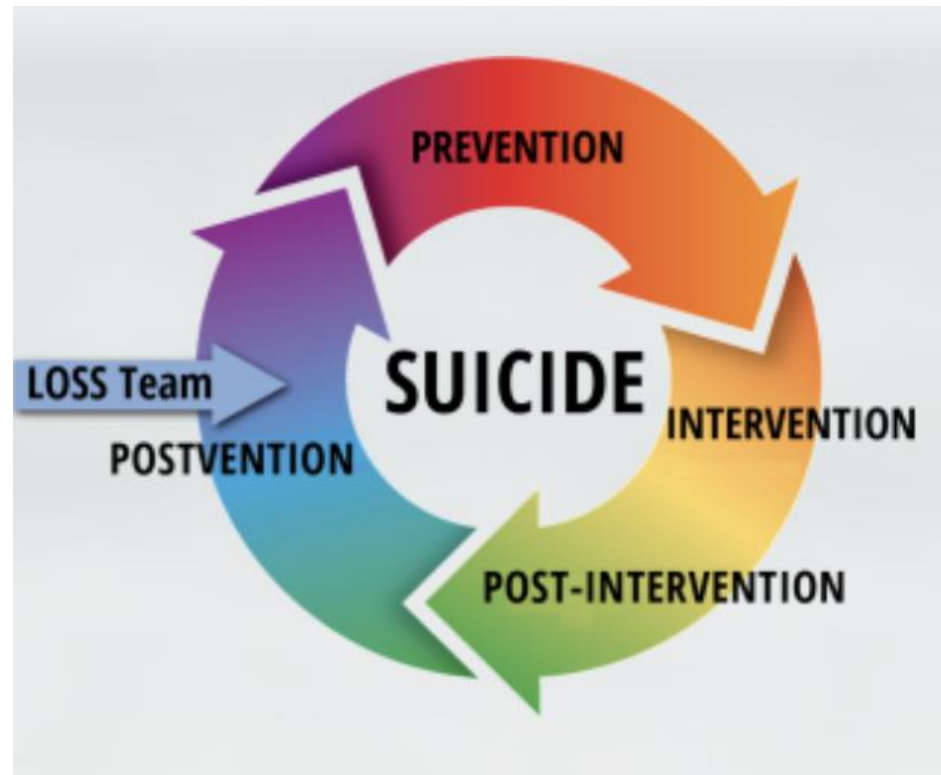
# Postvention is prevention

**Suicide postvention refers to an organized response in the aftermath of a suicide to facilitate healing associated with the grief and distress of suicide loss**

- Reduces likelihood of suicide contagion & additional suicides
- Mitigates the impacts of a loss
- Facilitates healing

**But most postvention services require survivor awareness to access**

- Active postvention eliminates “the stumble effect”



Be the light of hope  
on their darkest day



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OF LEWIS & CLARK  
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# What is a LOSS Team?

- Local Outreach to Suicide Survivors (LOSS) Team
- Teams go to the scene of confirmed suicides following coroner notification to provide support, resources, and hope to the newly bereaved
- Partnership with coroners' offices and/or law enforcement
- Made up of behavioral health professionals and community members who have lost a loved one to suicide
- Created in 1999 by Dr. Frank Campbell, past president of the American Association of Suicidology, to address needs of survivors
- Evidence-based for connecting and engaging survivors in support services quickly
- 40 teams across the U.S. and several international locations, none in Montana

# LOSS Team of Lewis and Clark County Area



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**TEAM**  
**OF LEWIS & CLARK**  
**COUNTY AREA**

- Subgroup of Lewis and Clark Suicide Prevention Coalition
- Funded by HB 118 via DPHHS (9-month grant with renewal opportunities)
- Partnership with coroner's office
- Advisory group of key stakeholders
- Consultant assisting with implementation
- Roll out begins March 1
- Plan to cover entire county and eventually expand to tri-county area
- Applying for public health associate through CDC to support project and explore psychological autopsy, mortality review



# LOSS Team of Lewis and Clark County Area

- Two free sessions with a grief counselor via partnership with Awareness Network
- Connection to services via CONNECT at scene and regular follow up calls
  - 1 week, 1 month, 3 months, 6 months, 9 months & 1 year
  - Calls to assess suicidality, make connection to care, ID other survivors
- Resource materials



# Volunteer with LOSS Team LCCA

- Training and interview for survivor volunteers, including on-scene etiquette, how to respond
- Debriefing process to prevent re-traumatization
- Survivor volunteers often find unexpected healing by helping others
- Seeking volunteers now!
  - Clinicians, survivors (lived experience)



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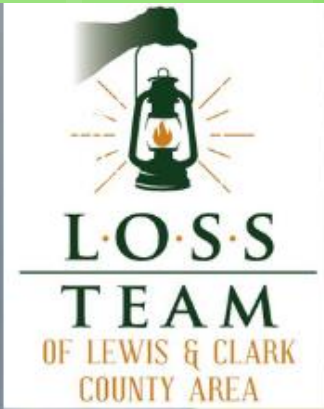
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TEAM

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Lewis & Clark  
Public Health



## Your local LOSS Team needs you!

### INFORMATION SESSIONS:

- Sat., Feb. 12, 10 a.m. Register at <https://bit.ly/lossinfo>
- Wed., Feb. 16 at 6:30 p.m. Register at <https://bit.ly/lossinfo2>

Learn how YOU can join a team to help survivors in the immediate aftermath of a suicide loss



# LOSS Team Volunteer Training



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SAT., FEB. 26 | 8 - 4 PM | FIRST CHRISTIAN  
CHURCH | 311 POWER ST., HELENA

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Register at <https://bit.ly/losstraining>

# Questions? Want to get involved?

[lcsuicideprevention.org/loss-team/](http://lcsuicideprevention.org/loss-team/)

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