

The Human Services Newsletter of Queens

Volume 23 Number 5

April 2009

SUICIDE PREVENTION AND PUBLIC HEALTH

Within the United States today, suicide and its costs to the nation in human lives and capital has become one of the nation's most persistent and intractable public health problems. It is estimated that the total cost of suicide to the U.S. economy in the year 2000 was \$125.8 billion dollars. Each year approximately 30,000 Americans commit suicide and as many as 650,000 receive emergency medical treatment after attempting, but failing to complete a suicide attempt. The statistics about suicide are staggering:

Approximately 1,300 New Yorkers take their own lives each year, and it is estimated that for every suicide death, there are anywhere from 8-25 suicide attempts. *(NYS Dept. of Health)*

The number of New Yorkers who lost their lives to suicide in 2000 and 2001 exceeds the number of New Yorkers who lost their lives to the World Trade Center disaster. *(NYC Dept. of Health and Mental Hygiene)*

Approximately 150,000 New York teenagers attempt suicide each year, and 70 will die as a result. The national rate of teen suicide has nearly tripled since the 1950's *(Center for Disease Control)*

Suicide is now the third leading cause of death among young New Yorkers ages 15-24. *(National Center for Health Statistics)*

In NYS and nationally, deaths by suicide outnumber deaths by homicide. *(NYS Dept. of Health, National Institute of Mental Health)*

Nationally, there is an average of one suicide among the elderly every 90 minutes. *(National Strategy for Suicide Prevention)*

It's reported that someone commits suicide every 17 minutes in the United States. Suicide is the eleventh leading cause of death for all Americans and the third leading cause of death among American youth. The largest number of suicide deaths occur among middle-aged men, between 35 and 44 years of age, with the risk for suicide increasing for those with a mental illness or those persons who abuse alcohol. Specific professions such as psychiatrist, fireman, and police are also disproportionately affected by suicide, and the rate of suicide among children and youth is increasing. Suicide rates vary with young Latina women, Asian seniors also having higher rates of suicide.

Research shows female suicides were significantly high in densely populated areas, but male suicides were highest in the most rural areas. Their conclusions centered on the finding that differences in suicide methods, the likelihood of communicating suicidal intent, and variations in access to psychiatric services could be contributing factors to the observed differences between urban and rural suicide rates.

Suicide survivors include both those who have not completed a suicide attempt and family members of those who died by suicide. It has become increasingly important for human service providers to recognize warning signs and to know how to provide treatment or to make appropriate referrals. (Please see page six for additional information.)

*Much of the information in the above article was taken from:
http://www.omh.state.ny.us/omhweb/suicide_prevention/*

"Over 86 Years of Serving the Queens Community"

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

APRIL

Mon., 4/20 4– 7pm
Center for Nonprofit Strategy and Management, United Way, & IBM: “Nonprofit Technology Challenges in the New Economy” Panel for senior NP execs at Baruch Coll. Info & Tech Bdg Newman Conf. Cr, 7th Fl, Rm 750, 151 E. 25th St. (Lex. & 3rd Ave.) NYC RSVP: nonprofit.workshops@baruch.cuny.edu or (646) 660-6743.

Wed., 4/22 9am-11:30am
QICA: “Creative Aging, Visual & Performing Arts Enrichment for All Seniors” at Qns Boro Hall, Rm. 213, 120-55 Queens Blvd., Kew Gardens. (718) 268-5954.

Thurs., 4/23 10am-Noon
QCSW: “Domestic Violence - Developing A Safety Plan” 221-10 Jamaica Ave., Ste. 107, Queens Vill. Infor & reg. (718) 468-8025.

Sat., 4/25 12noon-6pm
NY Assoc. For Psychiatric Rehab. Svcs., (NYAPRS): are 5th Annual Mental Health Film Festival to raise awareness about the real lives of people living with psychiatric disabilities at St Francis Col., 182 Remsen St., Bklyn. Hghts. \$5 Adv., \$7 Info/tickets, Carla Rabinowitz 212 780-1400x7726.

Wed., 4/29 9:30am-11:30am
BP Task Force On Domestic Violence, Sexual Assault, Child Maltreatment and Elder Abuse: “Domestic Violence & Disabilities”. Presentation by the Urban Justice Center and Barrier Free Living. QBH Rm., 213, Part II - Kew Gardens.

Wed., 4/29 9:30am-1pm
The Center for Rehab & Recov: “Groups Recovering Together,” at The Coalition, 90 Broad St., 8th Fl. Conf Rm, NYC. \$25 fee. RSVP D Short (212) 742-1600 x 235.

Wed., 4/29 2pm-5pm
SafeTALK Training (Suicide) at Good Shepherd, 305 7th Ave., 20th Fl., NYC. RSVP: celia_ramos@goodshepherds.org.

MAY

May 4-8 Varies
YAI Conf.: Building on Abilities Promoting Person-Centered Programs and Policies in Developmental and Learning Disabilities. FEE. Questions (212) 273-6388 or www.yai-rc.org.

Thur. 5/7 9:30-11am
QMHC Legislative Breakfast Atrium Holliswood Hosp., 87-37 Palermo St., Hollis. Info N. Etrog (718) 869-8822.

Wed., 5/13 8am-1pm
Geriatric Comm., Qns Mental Health Cncl, QCSW, QICA: It's Not Just the Blues. Depression in the Seniors at Parker at 271-11 76th Avenue, New Hyde Park. For info., (718) 224-0566 or Jbardavid@sfy.org

Thur. 5/14 5:30pm-8pm
NASW: “A Community Organizer in the White House: Discerning the Opportunities for SW in NYC During a Time of Crisis.” Members & prospective members. RSVP to (212) 668-0050.

Sun., 5/18 tba
AIDS Walk, NY Central Park, NYC -meeting place at the corner of 5th Ave., & 59th Sts. (Right pass the GMHC Main Registratuon booth) Contct: Kevin Blank, 718-472-9400 ext.1837, kblank@acqc.org

Thurs., 5/21 9:30am-1:30pm
CSCS 14th Annual City Advocacy Day at 250 Bdway. For info., Bobbie Sackman, (212) 398-6565 x226.

QCSW is planning its summer and fall training series and conferences. Please direct your suggestions and requests to Bette Engel, 718 468-8025 or qcsw@aol.com.

QCSW has a loose leaf binder for meetings of interest to Queens agencies. Please call for information to check for competing meetings on days you are planning to schedule one. Also please include us on your mailing list, if you would like your meetings listed in the Human Services Newsletter of Queens, Calendar of Events, or in our loose leaf binder.

DISCRIMINATION IS ILLEGAL IN NEW YORK CITY: LAWFUL SOURCE OF INCOME

The New York City Human Rights Law is one of the most comprehensive civil rights laws in the nation. The Law prohibits discrimination in employment, housing and public accommodations based on race, color, creed, age, national origin, alienage or citizenship status, gender (including gender identity and sexual harassment), sexual orientation, disability, marital status, and partnership status. In addition, the Law affords protection against discrimination in employment based on arrest or conviction record and status as a victim of domestic violence, stalking and sex offenses. In housing, the Law affords additional protections based on lawful occupation, family status, and any lawful source of income. The City Human Rights Law also prohibits retaliation and bias-related harassment.

In March 2008, the Administrative Code of the City of New York was amended making "lawful source of income" a protected class (Local Law 10/2008) under the City's Human Rights Law.

In general, the law prohibits the owners of buildings in New York City with six or more apartments from refusing to rent or otherwise dispose of property to any person due to their lawful source of income. The amendment defines "lawful source of income" as income derived from social security or any form of federal, state or local public assistance or housing assistance, including section 8 vouchers.

Two examples where the six or more units requirement does not apply include, rent controlled apartments where the tenant resided in the apartment when the law took effect (March 2008), and where the owner owns another building in the city that has six or more units. Under these circumstances, regardless of the number of units in the building in question, the housing provider would be required to accept the subsidy.

The Commission interprets this amendment to apply to new, as well as existing tenants.

The amendment also prohibits the printing of advertisements that are discriminatory in nature; therefore, on-line or newspaper ads and billboards that state "No Programs" are discriminatory and create a separate cause of action under the law.

Those who believe they have been the victim of discrimination in the City of New York, may file a complaint with the Law Enforcement Bureau of the City's Commission on Human Rights, the Community Service Centers. The complaint must be filed within one year of the last alleged act of discrimination. An appointment is needed for an Intake interview. For those unable to travel to the Commission's offices, alternative arrangements will be made.

The Queens office of the NYC Commission on Human Rights has a new address.

Katie Bracken, Director
Queens Community Service Center
The New York City Commission on Human Rights
153-01 Jamaica Ave. 2nd floor
Jamaica, New York 11432
718- 657-3061
kbracken@cchr.nyc.gov

\$250 PAYMENT TO SOCIAL SECURITY & SSI RECIPIENTS

President Obama recently signed the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009. This means people on SSI or Social Security will receive \$250. Social Security & SSI recipients do not need to file a tax return to receive the 2009 Stimulus Payment. The one-time \$250 payment to Social Security recipients is part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act and not tied to the 2008 tax return. It will be sent directly by the Social Security Administration. Nearly 55 million Social Security and SSI beneficiaries are entitled to this payment and should receive it by early June 2009. It will be a separate payment, not included in the regular monthly benefit payment. The payment will be delivered in the same way current Social Security or SSI benefits are, by check, direct deposit, or Direct Express debit card payment. Individuals may receive only one \$250 one-time payment regardless of how many types of benefits they receive. An individual receiving Social Security and SSI or an individual receiving Social Security and VA or Railroad Retirement benefits, will be entitled to only one payment. Individuals receiving benefits from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs or Railroad Retirement Board may also be eligible for these one-time payments.

*“Submitted by Connecting to Advantages and
Fred Westendorf, a Westchester County AARP tax-form volunteer
and partially from the official Social Security Website: <http://ssa.gov/payment/>”*

CHILD CARE TAX CREDIT

New York City's Child Care Tax Credit, one of the first municipal child care tax credits in the nation, is in its inaugural year, and has had more than 50,000 New Yorkers claiming it. The Child Care Tax Credit is designed to help more families afford child care and help more parents to work full-time, is part of NYC's anti-poverty strategy. City residents who earn \$30,000 or less and pay child care expenses for children age three and under may qualify for this local tax credit of up to \$1,733. In 2008, New York City Child Care Tax Credit filers received more than \$30 million with an average refund of \$600. Working families can call 311 to learn whether they qualify for tax credits like the Child Care Tax Credit and the Earned Income Tax Credit, as well as to locate free or low-cost tax preparation sites.

This year, as a safe and affordable alternative to professional tax preparation services, the City expanded its Tax Prep Plus program to offer professionally-prepared tax returns by a Tax One professional for only \$20 at 12 community-based organizations throughout the five boroughs. Families earning less than \$55,000 and individuals earning less than \$30,000 qualify. Tax Prep Plus sites will not offer refund anticipation loans and other predatory products to their customers, ensuring that consumers get every penny of their refund.

New York City residents with dependents and who earn less than \$45,000, as well as individuals who earn less than \$20,000, are also eligible for free income tax preparation at one of the city's 54 Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) sites. Volunteers at the VITA sites will help residents file for the tax credits for which they qualify including the Earned Income Tax Credit and the New York City Child Care Tax Credit. In 2007, New Yorkers claimed approximately \$2.14 billion in total earned income tax credits. VITA sites helped more than 82,000 New Yorkers obtain an average Earned Income Tax Credit refund of \$2,600.

MORE TUBERCULOSIS IN QUEENS

While the number of tuberculosis cases reached its fifth consecutive record low in New York City in 2008, Queens experienced an increase, and the citywide TB rate is still nearly three times the national rate (11.2 versus 4.2 cases per 100,000 people). A total of 895 cases were reported in 2008 – a 2% decrease from the 914 cases in 2007 and a 78% decrease from the high levels seen in the early 1990s, when the city faced a TB epidemic. TB remains a devastating problem in much of the developing world, affecting an estimated 9 million people each year and killing more than 1.5 million annually worldwide.

Tuberculosis is preventable and curable, so New Yorkers at risk should not be afraid to get tested. Screening and treatment in the Health Department chest centers are free and no one is asked about immigration status.

Tuberculosis is a bacterial infection that spreads from person to person through the air. The infection can remain latent for many years before causing active disease, usually in the lungs. When people who are sick with TB cough or speak, they expel TB germs into the air. Other people may breathe in the TB germs, and some may become sick. No place in the world is safe from tuberculosis. Although 80 percent of cases are concentrated in 22 developing countries, TB is an airborne enemy that honors no boundaries.

In New York City, where immigrants make up 36% of the population, TB disproportionately affects non-U.S.-born residents. In 2008, immigrants accounted for 76% of the city's TB cases, and almost half of the patients were people born in China, Mexico, Ecuador, Dominican Republic or Haiti – countries where TB rates remain high.

Queens has experienced a 12% increase in TB cases in 2008, after a decline the previous year. TB case rates declined in Manhattan (by 15%), Brooklyn (7%) and the Bronx (5%) in 2008. The number of cases remained stable in Staten Island. The Health Department is working closely with community partners in Queens and other boroughs to control TB.

Multidrug-resistant tuberculosis (MDR-TB) refers to TB that is resistant to the most effective medications, making it difficult to cure. The number of MDR-TB cases in New York City remained the same as last year, at nine cases. New cases of MDR-TB have declined 98% since the early 1990s due to better case management and infection control. Last year the city had just two cases of extensively drug-resistant tuberculosis (XDR-TB), which is resistant to even more drugs than MDR-TB.

Brief contact with people who are sick with TB (on a train or bus, for example) is unlikely to cause infection. TB is not spread by shaking hands, sharing food or having sex. The infection is usually spread through close, daily contact. Most people don't know they have TB infection until they become sick. People at high risk can stop TB by getting themselves tested and taking treatment to prevent TB disease. The Health Department offers free, confidential and convenient TB testing and state-of-the-art treatment in all five boroughs. For more information call 311 or visit www.nyc.gov/health/tb.

People who should get tested for TB include those:

- with symptoms of active TB (coughing, sweating, fatigue, weight loss, fever);
- who have spent a long time with someone with active TB disease;
- who have recently come from or traveled to a country with a high rate of TB;
- who have HIV infection, lowered immunity, or certain medical conditions such as diabetes or chronic kidney failure;
- who have worked or lived in a homeless shelter, prison or other group setting;

REMEMBER THE WARNING SIGNS OF SUICIDE

Here's an Easy-to-Remember Mnemonic: **IS PATH WARM?**

IS: I Ideation, S Substance Abuse

PATH: P Purposelessness, A Anxiety, T Trapped, H Hopelessness

WARM?: W Withdrawal, A Anger, R Recklessness, M Mood Changes

A person in acute risk for suicidal behavior most often will show **Warning Signs of Acute Risk:**

Threatening to hurt or kill him or herself, or talking of wanting to hurt or kill him/herself; and/or,
Looking for ways to kill him/herself by seeking access to firearms, available pills, or other means; and/or,
Talking or writing about death, dying or suicide, when these actions are out of the ordinary.

These might be remembered as expressed or communicated ideation. If observed, seek help as soon as possible by calling 911, contacting a mental health professional or calling 1-800-273-TALK (8255) for a referral.

Additional Warning Signs:

Increased substance (alcohol or drug) use

No reason for living; no sense of purpose in life

Anxiety, agitation, unable to sleep or sleeping all the time

Feeling trapped - like there's no way out

Hopelessness

Withdrawal from friends, family and society

Rage, uncontrolled anger, seeking revenge

Acting reckless or engaging in risky activities, seemingly without thinking

Dramatic mood changes.

(from Suicidology: <http://www.suicidology.org/web/guest/stats-and-tools/warning-signs>)

GET HELP - 1-800-LIFENET

(1-877-AYUDESE en Español; 1-877-990-8585 for Chinese callers)

1-800-LIFENET, is a confidential, toll-free help line for NYC residents. It operates 24 hours per day/7 days per week. The hotline's staff of trained mental health professionals help callers find the most appropriate mental health and substance abuse services for their needs. LIFENET is multilingual and multicultural. LIFENET assists people who are experiencing a crisis. LIFENET has authorized linkages with the 23 mobile crisis teams and Emergency Medical Services (EMS). This unique, life-saving authority allows LIFENET to provide a prompt response to callers in urgent need of psychiatric assistance.

RESOURCE DIRECTORY**DOMESTIC VIOLENCE CENTER**

The Family Justice Center in Queens (QFJC)
126-02 82nd Avenue
Kew Gardens, NY 11424
CONTACT: (718) 575-4500.

Walk in Anytime - Monday through Friday, 9:00am to 5:00pm, no appointment needed.

QFJC allows victims of domestic violence to meet with a prosecutor, speak with a trained counselor, and apply for housing and financial assistance in one visit, in their native language, while their children play safely in the next room. Services are provided by: Case Managers, NYCPD Domestic Violence Prevention Officers, Probation Officers, DA's Domestic Violence Bureau, Therapeutic Counselors, Elder Abuse Services Social workers and attorneys, Lawyers and paralegals specializing in family matters, immigration & divorce, Self-Sufficiency services. Children 3 and older can spend time with a child specialist in the Children's Room where organized play activities are available during the day, while the parent receives services on-site.

CHILD ADVOCACY CENTER

Safe Horizon's Queens Child Advocacy Center
112-25 Queens Blvd.
Forest Hills, NY 11375

CONTACT: Myra E. Shapiro, Senior Director 718-575-1342

Safe Horizon's Child Advocacy Centers (CACs) are child-friendly, safe spaces that provide prevention, intervention, emotional support and treatment services to physically and sexually abused children and their families by using a child-focused team approach. The CACs work to prevent retraumatization and to ensure that a coordinated investigation is begun immediately. At Safe Horizon's CACs, advocates, the police department, the district attorneys office, medical providers, and the New York City Administration for Children's Services (ACS) collaborate to provide a cooperative and coordinated approach to the investigation of child abuse cases.

DV & DISABILITY

Barrier Free Living Inc.
270 East Second Street
New York, NY 10009-7815

CONTACT: 24-Hour Hotline (212) 533-4358 9am-5pm Mon. Thru. Fri.,
After 5pm and on weekends call are forwarded to 1-800-621-HOPE

Services are offered in 6 languages: English, Spanish, Italian, French, Haitian Creole and Sign Language. This Domestic Violence program serves individuals throughout the five boroughs with disabilities (ADA), are abused (physical, verbal, financial, sexual, emotional), by a family member, partner or caregiver. Their motto is that all individuals deserve to live dignified and safe lives free of abuse. BFL operates a fully accessible shelter and also provides services to those not living in the shelter.

Please see Page 8 for information on submitting material for the RESOURCE DIRECTORY.

A Note From The Executive Director

As we work on this newsletter, I am, once again, caught in a dilemma. Business is going on as usual. The Social Work Reception in March was a success. Additional trainings and conferences are in the works. We continue doing what we do, while working for continued funding. We know that if we do not get sufficient funding, we will not be able to continue past June. But we are hopeful our Board, Volunteers and Staff will be successful. We have received lots of positive feedback to our efforts, but still no promises.

The calls we receive for help are coming in faster than ever, and we hope we will continue to be here to answer them. We are planning even more needed trainings and events.

Please do your part by renewing your membership if you have not yet done so. A membership form is enclosed for your convenience. Additional donations are, of course, most welcome. Thank you in advance.

Joan Serrano Laufer, ACSW
Executive Director

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