

# Suicide prevention workshop open to the public

Margarita Cambest, 505-5439/@ritacambest 11:08 p.m. EDT October 31, 2016



(Photo: Provided by TrueNorth Wellness Services)

Suicide affects not just the person who dies but everyone around them.

For that reason, TrueNorth Wellness Services is looking to make suicide intervention a community effort that extends beyond the office of mental health professional.

Billed as a first aid for suicide prevention, Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training, or ASIST, teaches the belief that suicide is a community health program that can be prevented through cooperation, according to a news release. It focuses broadly on how to recognize when someone may be at risk and create a plan to support their safety.

"This is not for professionals," said family based program manager Sabrina Valente. "You don't have to come into the workshop with any skills before you walk through the door. Suicide is a problem that affects everyone."

About 350 people call TrueNorth every month to talk about suicide, and more than 1,800 Pennsylvanians died by suicide in 2014, the latest year Centers for Disease Control and Prevention statistics are available. Nationally, it was the 10th leading cause of death but the second leading cause for those ages 10 to 34 behind unintentional injury.

ASIST calls cues sent by people who may be suicidal "invitations" and teaches community members to pick up those invites, explained True North crisis intervention manager and trainer Jayne Wildasin.

"Imagine you send out an invitation to a party and no one responds," Wildasin said. "They're sending out all these invitations in the hopes that someone will respond, and nobody does. If you're already depressed and no one has the time to spend with you to see what's going on, how bad does that make you feel?"



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The course is open to the public, but educators, mental health professionals, clergy, juvenile justice and law enforcement are highly encouraged to attend. The training will be from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Nov. 8 and 9. The workshop is free to TrueNorth crisis employees, \$150 for non-affiliates and \$75 for agency partners. For more information or to register, call 717-632-4900 ext. 2448.

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