

SUICIDE HELPLINE

**SERVICE PLAN IMPLEMENTATION AND
PROGRAM GUIDELINES 2001-2002**

JULY 2001

SUICIDE HELPLINE PROGRAM GUIDELINES

1. PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The Suicide Helpline is funded through the Department of Human Services Telephone Counselling Program. Details regarding the Telephone Counselling Program are outlined in the document *Telephone Counselling – Service Plan Implementation and Program Guidelines 2001-2002*.

From July 2001, the Suicide Helpline is to be jointly delivered by the two agencies which were previously involved in the Victorian Suicide Prevention Telephone Counselling Field Trial, CareRing and Lifeline Melbourne.

The Suicide Helpline is a 24-hour suicide intervention telephone counselling, information and referral service accessible through a dedicated single number for the cost of a local call throughout Victoria.

The Suicide Helpline provides:

- Crisis assessment and intervention pertinent to suicide prevention
- Relevant information particularly for people concerned about another suiciding
- Support for people bereaved by suicide
- Facilitated referral to needed services across Victoria.

The Suicide Helpline is targeted at the following groups within the community:

- People in whom suicidal thinking is already active
- People concerned about the suicide risk of others
- People affected by others' suicidal behaviour.

The Suicide Helpline is provided by a selected team of qualified paid staff and volunteers who receive training and supervision in telephone-based 24-hour suicide intervention including community referral.

The model for the delivery and operation of the Suicide Helpline is outlined in the document *Developmental Framework for Suicide Helpline Victoria* (March 2001 – updated July 2001) which was developed by the Suicide Helpline working group.

2. PROGRAM AIMS

The purpose of the Suicide Helpline is to provide interim crisis intervention help to people at risk of suicide and those concerned about or affected by others' suicidal behaviour.

The intervention objectives are:

- To facilitate access to a Helpline counsellor
- To reduce risk and identify and reduce imminent threats to safety

- To promote resourcefulness – strengthen coping and life-supports
- To provide referrals to facilitate access to further emergency and/or ongoing help
- To minimise recurrence – help callers sustain life-affirming choices and actions
- To increase utilisation of the service.

3. STANDARDS

Telephone counselling services funded through the Telephone Counselling Program must comply with the *Telephone Counselling Services Program Standards* (June 2001).

The Suicide Helpline must also comply with the *Suicide Helpline Standards* (June 2001). These standards should also guide the suicide intervention activities of all telephone counselling services funded through the Telephone Counselling Program.

It is also expected that telephone counselling services will comply with relevant professional standards such as *Professional Standards for Telephone Counselling, Information and Support Services* (Victorian Association of Telephone Support Services 1997).

4. PROGRAM MONITORING, ACCOUNTABILITY AND REVIEW

Each telephone counselling service is funded in accordance with a Service Agreement, which includes a service plan and financial accountability requirements.

Regional offices of the Department of Human Services will monitor the achievements of the service evaluation information required through the service plan. Quarterly client data collection reports are to be submitted to the regional office.

The Suicide Helpline will also provide data and reports as outlined in the document *Suicide Helpline Evaluation Framework*. These reports are to be provided to the Family and Community Support Branch, with copies to the relevant regional offices.

5. PROGRAM FUNDING

Funding is provided to cover the costs of providing the Suicide Helpline, including

- paid counsellors at both service locations 24 hours a day, seven days a week
- telephone calls
- technology rental, administration and maintenance
- a contribution towards management costs.

In 2001/2002, non-recurrent funding is also provided for training and promotion.

Agencies funded through the Telephone Counselling Program are required to participate in relevant research initiated by the Department of Human Services.

SUICIDE HELPLINE SERVICE PLAN IMPLEMENTATION GUIDELINES

1. SUICIDE HELPLINE – OBJECTIVE

To provide a 24-hour telephone counselling service which provides interim crisis intervention help to people at risk of suicide and those concerned about or affected by others' suicidal behaviour.

2. SERVICE STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES

- Suicide Helpline Standards (June 2001)
- Telephone Counselling Services Program Standards (June 2001)
- Suicide Helpline Service Plan Implementation and Program Guidelines 2001-2002 (this document)
- Telephone Counselling Service Plan Implementation and Program Guidelines 2001-2002

3. PERFORMANCE MEASURES

Performance Measures
<p><i>Key Output Measure:</i> Total number of calls answered Target: 6,000 at each service location (4,000 calls to the Suicide Helpline at each location and 2,000 suicide-related calls to each location's general TCS)</p>
<p>Percentage of callers sampled who are satisfied with the service provided Target: 85%</p>
<p>Percentage of callers provided with a service Target: 90%</p>
<p>Percentage of calls responded to within five minutes Target: 90%</p>

Definitions of Terms in Performance Measures

Service

For telephone counselling services, *service* is defined as:

- response to callers with a range of concerns or personal emergencies, including potentially suicidal callers
- counselling
- provision of information (including dissemination, mailout or handout of information resources such as brochures, videos, tapes, etc)
- referral to other agencies.

4. DATA COLLECTION - INFORMATION REQUIRED

The agencies delivering the Suicide Helpline will provide data and reports as outlined in the document *Suicide Helpline Evaluation Framework*.

5. FURTHER INFORMATION

Further information about the Suicide Helpline can be obtained from the Telephone Counselling Program Advisor in the Western or Eastern Metropolitan Regional Offices of the Department of Human Services.