

TWELVE MONTH ANNIVERSARY OF A SUICIDE

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FOLLOW UP

The 12 month anniversary of a suicide cluster or of an episode of suicide contagion can be a time of increased risk associated with:

- a renewed focus on the death of any loved ones and the associated grief,
- memorial services (including Te Kura Kohatu or Unveiling of the Stone);
- an increased focus on suicide as a possible 'option' associated with the renewed focus on any previous deaths.

The risk is likely to be highest for:

- those who were impacted on by the initial deaths;
- those previously not identified but who are currently vulnerable and who may be thinking about suicide.

Ultimately this renewed focus on the deaths and subsequently on suicide as a possible option, may contribute to a risk of an "echo cluster" or a repeat cluster at the time of the 12 month anniversary.

MINIMISING RISK

- Maintain an awareness that this is a time of increased risk in the community.
- •If possible, alert other agencies that this is a potential time of increased risk and ask for increased awareness for signs of risk .
- •Renew screening processes as carried out at the initial crisis stage – focus on those who may be vulnerable at this time, and screen and refer as necessary.
- Re-identify those individuals initially thought of as being high risk and see where they are at now – screen and refer to services as necessary.
- Identify those bereaved by the initial suicides and explore whether they have support at this difficult time and if appropriate what role your agency could play in providing this.
- Liaise with any parties likely to be holding memorials to advise around possible risks and ensure appropriate supports are in place. In particular, ensure any memorials focused on young people:
 - are monitored by adults,
 - have support services available,
 - are limited in drug and alcohol use, and
 - are held with parental support and involvement.

- Maintain awareness that different cultural groups may acknowledge the 12 month anniversary in different ways.
 - Ask if there will be a Te Kura Kohatu, an Unveiling of the Stone at this time. This is a culturally important event for Maori which brings whanau and friends together for a weekend to unveil the gravestone and to remember and celebrate the life of the deceased.
 - Ensure key Maori providers link back in with the whanau, provide the culturally appropriate support as required before and after this important ritual, and provide guidelines around safe memorials

Other CASA resources that may be of use at this time:

- CASA's CPRS Circles of Vulnerability
- CASA's CPRS Identifying Suicidal Concerns in Children and Adolescents
- CASA's CPRS Risk Factors and Triggers for Suicidal Behaviour
- CASA's CPRS Memorials and Remembrance Activities for those who have died by Suspected Suicide

REFERENCES

1. Coleman, L (2004). *The copycat effect: how the media and popular culture trigger the mayhem in tomorrow's headlines.*
2. Dafoe., B and Monk, L. (2005). *Suicide Postvention is Prevention. A proactive planning workbook for communities affected by Youth Suicide.*