**ESP Meeting Minutes**

**July 24, 2023**

**Present:** Stephanie Busch, Cindy Lack, Prescott Nadeau, Len Howard, Bill Elwell, Ollie Neith, Clarke Collins, Christine Bullard, Trevor Whipple, Ashley Happy, Emma Harrigan, Loretta Stalnaker, Samantha Sweet, Lance Burnham, Nick Nichols, Donna Jacob (notetaker).

**Welcome and Introductions/Attendance**

**Welcome of new members**

**Meeting Minutes from March 27, 2023**

Motion was made and seconded to accept the motions as corrected. Motion passed unanimously.

* Welcome & Check-in
* Mins from February meeting
* **Guest presentation:** Postvention (post-suicide prevention) and First responders (Nick Nicholas)
* General updates
* Member updates
  1. First Responder Wellness Conference (Castleton) Update
* Next Steps, actions for the commission in 2023
* Next meeting

**Guest presentation:** Postvention (post-suicide prevention) and First responders (Nick Nichols)

With this grant, we have additional resources and staffing to bring to bear for EMS and first responders. It’s a 5-year grant through CDC – co-managed by VDH and DMH. We can focus on prevention and protection of large groups, people and populations. This grant also expands peer supports for higher risk groups. For example, SECURE is funded in part by this grant.

Postvention is described as an intervention conducted after a suicide, focused on supporting the bereaved. Those who experience a suicide loss are also at a greater risk for suicide. Also, when one suicide death happens, many people are affected by that one suicide.

We formed a postvention working group last year, did a number of key informant interviews with our state partners and loss survivors, and we also surveyed first responders specifically.

We identified strengths and needs.

Strengths:

Embedded mental health responders with police departments and victims services.

We found there was strong coordination in some parts of the state between first responders and mental health crisis workers, but this is not consistent across state.

Having CISD/CISM available for first responders.

Availability of counseling and peer support, e.g. SECURE.

Needs:

Improve the system of notification to ensure mental health crisis and other supports are available consistently, both immediately and long-term.

Improve coordination between first responders and Mental Health crisis – adopt and share standards.

Resource/educational materials need to be available for distribution to family members/loss survivors and shared following each death.

Training, resources and educational materials are updated and provided to first responders annually.

Ongoing funding available for postvention resources, training, and support (e.g., site cleanup).

Mental health/wellness support is consistently available for first responders who are involved in responding to suicide and other traumatic deaths and events.

Areas of Focus 2023 – 2024

Develop and distribute resource packets for loss survivors and first responders statewide.

Training for first responders on Postvention Best Practices – develop training plan to offer regular training for first responders.

Develop and promote Postvention Best Practice Guidelines for first responders and MH Response

Have not developed a training yet, but Center for First Responder Wellness has a training called “Healing from Helping: How First Responders can support those affected by suicide and learn skills to protect their emotional health.”

Suggestions or questions from the group:

Need for mental health support on scenes with families to support them; but there is a need for funding to support that work.

There was support for providing postvention training to all first responder groups; both short trainings and longer trainings.

There was also interest to provide cross training and suicide prevention classes, first responders, dispatchers. Talks about how to deal with callers as well as vicarious emotional trauma (not knowing the outcome of calls). But there’s a lack of personnel to get this information out.

G**eneral and Member Updates, Remainder of Year, Legislative Report, etc.**

The First Responder Wellness Conference being held in Castleton. Was supposed to be last week, but with flooding, shifted to this week. It is 7/26-7/27.

Ashley –Started a new series of enhancing communications. One is with 988. Working with the integration with 911.

The group reviewed ‘future activities’ as outlined in May meeting. These are outlined in the May minutes.

A timeline for the report would be to send out an invite between now and September to draft up definitions and recommendations for what a qualified clinician looks like. Also work around the PTSD workers compensation legislation.

Christine – happy to help with the qualified clinician piece.

Stephanie – thank you to all that you do in so many different levels of your life. I appreciate everyone’s levels of engagement. See those of you who attend at the Wellness Convention.