DISCUSSION GUIDE FOR HOSTING A MEETING ON SUICIDE PREVENTION

As a stakeholder in suicide prevention you are in the best position to determine what meeting format will work best in your community. The objectives you set out for the meeting as well as any recent publicity or unique experiences in your community with suicide and mental health issues are key factors. The size of your community and how many people you can reasonably expect to turn out are all important considerations.

Below you will find a few suggestions to ensure a successful meeting. Additionally, we have provided some useful tips on how to have a safe discussion on what can be a very sensitive and personal issue. In all cases the Mental Health Commission of Canada (MHCC) will be happy to assist you further as you move forward in planning your meeting.

Pre-meeting

1. Reach out to local mental health service providers in your community to explore what they advise as specific focus areas around suicide prevention that would be most helpful in your community at this point in time. In some regions and communities there are well established suicide prevention networks. In these instances the community may prefer to focus on a single aspect of the issue (seniors for example). In other communities a broader discussion may be more useful. The key is that this meeting benefit your community in the minds of human service providers and citizens.
2. Define the meeting objectives and the format that will work best in your community.
3. Define the specific stakeholders you wish to invite to the meeting (this should include mental health service providers and agencies, individuals with lived experience who have a very personal connection to this issue, as well as other community services who come into contact with members of the public who could benefit from greater awareness on issues around suicide prevention (teachers, police etc.).
4. To support your efforts in holding a successful meeting the MHCC if offering webinars for you and your staff to guide you through specific issues you may encounter.

Meeting

*Key Components*

1. Ground rules for having a safe and constructive discussion (confidentiality etc.)
2. Facilitator, Secretary and Record Keeper. An experienced moderator or facilitator can help the discussion stay on topic, be sure everyone is heard and move the dialogue along if there are lulls in the discussion. A secretary and/or record keeper will generate accurate notes to follow up after the meeting and to feed into the national outcome document.
3. Mental Health First Aider. Any discussion of suicide issues can trigger difficult emotions especially on the part of those with lived experience. A trained mental health first aider can support any attendees who need assistance. The Mental Health Commission will provide a list of Mental Health First Aiders in your area who will be able to attend.
4. Feedback document. Providing participants with a feedback document gives those who were not comfortable speaking on the issue another way to contribute to the conversation and to feed into national summary document.

*Potential Formats*

1. Community Forum - panel of key community leaders with expertise in area of suicide prevention (with a good cross-section of speakers). This format can be used for both small and large groups but can be less interactive. Panelists are asked to speak to their area of expertise. Following the presentations, the audience could be invited to ask questions either at a microphone or by submitting written questions to the moderator who would then choose the questions to be asked of the panelists.
2. Round Table discussion – suitable for smaller groups. In this format it is important to arrange the room in such a way as to encourage participation. Open ended questions that will spark discussion among attendees should be prepared in advance for the moderator. Limit the discussion time for any one participant to prevent a few people dominating the conversation and attempt to engage those who are less vocal to participate.
3. World Café style. This works for a larger number of participants and offers smaller, more intimate round table discussions within a large group. Discussions from within the smaller groups are fed back into the larger group. The following website has information about how to host this type of a meeting and can be modified to suit your needs. (<http://www.theworldcafe.com/method.html>)

* In any of the above formats we would suggest that you invite local organizations to bring a booth, display or handouts about their services. This will help to share knowledge of each other’s services at the community level. It would also be very helpful if organizers would collect one copy of any of the documents displayed and/or contact information of participants and send this to us so that we may make this information available through our knowledge exchange centre where relevant. It often helps to allow 30 minutes prior to the meeting for attendees to view the materials, ask questions and begin to network.

Post Meeting

1. Send thank you notes to those who assisted with the organization of or participated in the meeting.
2. Compile and share a summary of the discussion, key suggestions or feedback points as well as the meeting evaluations with the Mental Health Commission to contribute to the national document.
3. Knowledge sharing – if you identify local projects/programs/organizations that would like to share their experience with other communities across Canada submit these to the Mental Health Commission of Canada to post on “Collaborative Spaces”
4. Next steps for your community – did your meeting result in a commitment to take on future initiatives?

OP ED

**Time for a conversation about suicide?**

Every year, in Canada, nearly 3,900 people die as a result of suicide and many more attempt to end their lives. No part of society is immune to suicide. Suicide is a public health issue that affects us all. Suicide is one of the top ten causes of death in Canada and, among youth aged 15 – 24, it is the second leading cause of death next to accidents. The estimated financial cost of a suicide ranges from $433,000 to $4,131,000 per individual, depending on potential years of life lost, income level and effects on survivors. The emotional cost to the bereaved survivors of suicide is immeasurable. Did you know that the suicide of one person has the potential to significantly impact the lives 7 to 10 others and places them at higher risk of suicide themselves?

But it’s not all bad news. The good news is that the prevention of suicide is possible. While the causes of suicide are complex, we know that the promotion of good mental health, the prevention of mental illness and a reduction of stigma all contribute to mental wellness and the reduction of suicide and its consequences. We can all play a role in reducing suicides and we all have a collective responsibility to do so.

We must play a role in preventing suicide in our own communities. Suicide is an issue that is still surrounded by fear, shame and silence but by breaking the stigma and openly addressing the factors that contribute to suicide, we can all help to prevent it. By educating ourselves about the warning signs and recognizing risk factors, by agreeing to participate in a training program, by reaching out to a fellow human in need we can all suicide.

We are convening a meeting in our community to discuss suicide and what we can do locally and individually. We invite you to join us and take some time from your busy schedule to see what you can do to help and make yourself aware of what is happening in our own community on this important issue.

The meeting will be held on XXX at XXX. We look forward to seeing you there.

TIPS FOR HOSTING A 308 CONVERSATIONS

COMMUNITY MEETING

The Mental Health Commission of Canada wants to thank you for taking part in this national community conversation on suicide prevention. This document provides suggested steps for hosting your community conversation.

# What is 308 Conversations

This community meeting is part of the **308 Conversations** initiative launched by the Mental Health Commission of Canada, and is designed to gather valuable insight and ideas surrounding suicide prevention across Canada. Community meetings or “conversations” will be held across Canada. These conversations will bring interested community members and stakeholders under one roof to share what’s working and where the gaps are when it comes to suicide prevention in their communities.

# Who Is Part of 308 Conversations

The goal is to share the best ideas and work together to create lasting solutions that will serve our communities. The results will be gathered to produce a working community model with tools and solutions that can be shared as a resource for communities across Canada. **308 Conversations** will provide Canadians with information on the actions and initiatives taking place in their own community.

Local experts, service providers, healthcare providers, local police, teachers, social workers, service clubs, survivors, faith-based community leaders/groups, military, veterans and community leadership (municipal and provincial representatives), interested citizens and local media will all be invited and encouraged to discuss suicide prevention.

# What Materials Are Available to Host a Meeting

All organizers will receive a kit that provides templates and background information on how to host a **308 Conversations** community meeting. Organizers may wish to set aside a table at their **308 Conversations** meeting for community resources pamphlets provided by guest speakers or participants.

Materials can also be found on [www.mentalhealthcommission.ca/308conversations](http://www.mentalhealthcommission.ca/308conversations).

# Suggested Rollout

Outlined below are key items to consider when planning and implementing your **308 Conversations** community meeting. Please refer to additional template materials provided in this kit to help facilitate and create awareness of your discussion.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| 308 Conversations Checklist | | |
| Date |  | **Activity** |
| 3 Weeks Prior | | |
|  |  | Choose a date |
|  |  | Book a location |
|  |  | Choose a meeting format (Panel, town hall or roundtable etc) |
|  |  | Confirm AV materials needed |
|  |  | Invite stakeholders, high profile community advocates, panelists |
|  |  | Secure Mental Health First Aider |
|  |  | Customize materials in 308 Conversations event kit – also available online at [www.mentalhealthcommissionofcanada.ca/308conversations](http://www.mentalhealthcommissionofcanada.ca/308conversations) |
|  |  | Notify MHCC of location and date so it can be posted on their site |
|  |  | Create content for social media (refer to social media primer for tips) |
|  |  | Post meeting posters in high traffic areas |
| 2 Weeks Prior | | |
|  |  | Distribute householder materials to community papers and media |
|  |  | Place public notice in community paper and calendar of events |
|  |  | Issue news release |
| 1 Week Prior | | |
|  |  | Promote event through social media - #308conversations |
|  |  | Pitch media for interviews |
|  |  | Draft and deliver agenda for the meeting |
|  |  | Print feedback forms for all participants |
| A Final Checklist of Meeting Materials | | |
|  |  | Coffee, Tea, Water |
|  |  | Location Signs and tape |
|  |  | Boxes of Kleenex |
|  |  | Table for local informational material |
|  |  | Identify meeting note taker |
|  |  | Sign up sheet for participants |
|  |  | Power Point slides |
|  |  | Review discussion guide |
|  |  | Photo/media release waivers for participants |
|  |  | Printed feedback form with pens and pencils |
|  |  | AV |
| 1 Week Post | | |
|  |  | Draft thank you letters to invited guests (See template) |
|  |  | Submit feedback to MHCC |

*[www.mentalhealthcommission.ca/308conversations](http://www.mentalhealthcommission.ca/308conversations)*

# Suggested Tick Tock

**Date:** (Week Day), (Month Day), 2014, (Location) (City)

**308conversation: Public Conversation**– Organization, (Name) invites all community members to engage in a community conversation initiated by the Mental Health Commission of Canada at (location) to help in the development of a community model on suicide prevention.

**Upon Arrival:**

Insert details if applicable (ie. directions, parking, registration)

**Event Scenario:**

Meetings would be held in a community centre, library, school gym or an accessible location of the organizer’s choice. The room set up is to reflect the meeting format (panel, town hall). Coffee, tea, water and cookies could be offered to attendees.

**Contact Information:**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Organizer and volunteers | | |
| (Name) | (Number) | (email) |
| Mental Health Commission of Canada: | | |
| (Name) | (Number) | (email) |
| Stakeholders *(if applicable)* | | |
| (Name) | (Number) | (email) |

# Suggested Agenda

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Set-Up** | | |
| (time – 90 min. prior) | | Staff arrive on site  AV set-up in (location)  Tables and chairs set up  Registration table and info table set-up , feedback form on every chair  Coffee and tea, refreshments, set up |
| **Event** | | |
| (time- 30 min. prior) | | VIP and Stakeholders arrive at (location) |
| (time- 15 min. prior) | | Doors open and registration begin |
| (time  - 90 min) | 5 min  10 min  15 min  15 min  15 min  15 min  25 min  5 min | Organizer  Welcomes guests  Introduces MHCC/VIP/Stakeholders *(if applicable)*  Explains meeting format  States media policies\*  Importance of 308 Conversations process  Introduces four topics of discussion  Draft discussion topic1  Draft discussion topic 2  Draft discussion topic 3  Draft discussion topic 4  Final gathering of suggestions (what works well, where are the gaps)  Organizer delivers closing remarks |
| (time – 15 min.) | | Coffee and tea service continue |
| **Event Conclusion** | | |
| (time) | | Room teardown |

**\* Note to Media:**

Media are welcome to attend the meeting, however, for privacy reasons; no recording devices will be permitted inside the meeting. On the record interviews should take place prior to, or following the meeting.