

NEW SUPPORT AFTER SUICIDE WEBSITE

New Website Launched to Help Provide Support After Suicide

Jesuit Social Services today launched the next phase of their Support After Suicide Program.

'World Suicide Prevention Day is important in that it raises awareness about an issue that many people find it uncomfortable to talk about,' said Julie Edwards, CEO of Jesuit Social Services.

'Last year, our Support After Suicide program helped around 250 individuals talk about the grief they experience when they are bereaved by suicide,' said Ms Edwards. 'This program works because we provide a number of options for support, recognizing that some people prefer one-on-one counselling while others prefer group counselling.'

The primary goal of Support After Suicide is to increase the availability of timely and appropriate support to individuals and families—especially those with young children—who are bereaved by suicide.

'That's why we've extended our program—a website means people can access whenever it's convenient for them in the privacy of their own homes, at a friend's home, or even at a public library if they don't have access to a computer at home. This website will make support and information for people bereaved by suicide even more accessible.'

The website – www.supportaftersuicide.org.au – offers information in the following areas:

- What is grief?
- Suicide and grief
- Understanding suicide
- Responding to trauma
- Children and grief
- Young people and grief
- Communicating with children
- Special occasions - dealing with birthdays, Christmas and other special days.

The website also includes information on how to access personal counselling and support groups, stories from people who have been bereaved by suicide, and where to find help and resources.

'The Support After Suicide Program was really a lifeline for me,' said Lisa, mother of Jason. 'We learned how to look after ourselves and we had to do this, otherwise we couldn't cope.' Jason took his own life when he was 23 years old. His mother, sister and

brother, were struggling to deal with his suicide when a friend suggested they try the Support After Suicide Program.

'While we have participated in both personal and group counselling sessions,' said Lisa, 'we still refer to the website often to reinforce what we learn in those sessions. We were happy to have our story provided on the website. If we can help other families deal with their grief we're more than happy to help as we know what a struggle it is, but it's always reassuring when you find out you're not alone.'

Support After Suicide is based in Richmond, but individuals can also access counsellors in Lalor, Dandenong, Ferntree Gully and the Melbourne CBD.

Developed and offered by Jesuit Social Services, Support After Suicide is funded by the Commonwealth Department of Health and Ageing under the National Suicide Prevention Policy.

ENDS

MEDIA ENQUIRIES/INTERVIEWS

Contact Erin Bright

Tel: 9427-7388 Mobile : 0425715727

Email : erin.bright@jss.org.au

Website : www.jss.org.au

Jesuit Social Services 371 Church Street Richmond VIC 3121 Tel: (03) 9427 7388

Background material



Support After Suicide Information Sheet

Support After Suicide provides support and resources, counselling and groups for children, young people and adults who are bereaved as a result of suicide.

Direct support

Support After Suicide offers counselling and group work for children, young people, individuals and families. We have an eight week support group and a monthly support group – both professionally facilitated.

As part of the eight week group we conduct a 'Friends and Family Session' – this is an information and education evening for friends and family of the bereaved that provides information about suicide, bereavement, support and counselling, to help others effectively and sensitively respond to the bereaved. We also offer 'Climbing Through Grief' – a weekend of bushwalking and climbing for young people bereaved by suicide.

We are based in Richmond, but can also meet with people in Lalor, Dandenong, Ferntree Gully and the Melbourne CBD.

Online support – www.supportaftersuicide.org.au

For those who prefer to get their information online, the Support After Suicide website offers information in the following areas:

- What is grief?
- Suicide and grief
- Understanding suicide
- Responding to trauma
- Supporting a suicide bereaved person
- Children and grief
- Young people and grief
- Communicating with children
- Special occasions.

The website also includes information on how to access personal counselling or support groups, stories from people who have been bereaved by suicide, and where to find help and resources.

Education and training

We provide education and training to health, welfare and education professionals, and to the community on current bereavement theory, the unique issues and experiences associated with bereavement following suicide and how to provide support and counselling to those bereaved by suicide. We also provide education and training on working with suicide bereaved children and young people.

Support After Suicide Program Information

Support After Suicide, a program of Jesuit Social Services, commenced in July 2004 with \$300,000 over two years from the Commonwealth Department of Health and Ageing (under the National Suicide Prevention Strategy).

The primary goal of the project was to increase the availability of timely and appropriate support to individuals and families—especially those with young children—who are bereaved or affected by suicide.

This first phase of Support After Suicide functioned as a counselling service that also developed and provided a group support program. It also provided information, resources, secondary consultation and education to health, education and welfare professionals.

The program employed three part-time staff who each delivered the full range of the components of the program.

One of the major achievements of this first phase was the delivery of effective counselling and group support. Over the two years of this phase, 102 suicide bereaved people registered for counselling at Support After Suicide. This included the 26 people who attended a group program.

Evaluation data from the group program clearly indicated that this was successful. The participants of the first group completed pre- and post- group questionnaires. In summary, from the GHQ-28 (General Health Questionnaire), all four participants reached the threshold for a 'probable psychiatric disorder' at the commencement of the group. At the conclusion of the group, only one participant reached this threshold. (This one participant reached the threshold by one point only.)

The first phase of the project had several key achievements:

- the development and implementation of a successful group support program,
- effective counselling support,
- the development and implementation of a quality education program and
- the development of information and resources for the bereaved and also professionals.

The project also developed two information kits: one for schools, and one for GPs. The focus of these kits was responding to bereavement, particularly bereavement following suicide. These have been incorporated into the new Support After Suicide website.

Second phase

In late 2006, Support After Suicide received further funding from the NSPS: \$1.2million over 3 years.

There are five part-time counsellor/community educators and a full-time co-coordinator who is also a counsellor/community educator, and an administrative assistant.

The program has continued its previous activities but also has expanded in a number of ways:

- developed a group program for children (a one-day activity-based program)
- developed a group program for young people (a weekend activity-based program)
- developed a group program to support parents raising suicide bereaved children (particularly those who are now parenting alone). There is research evidence that bereavement outcomes are better for children whose parents have participated in a parenting program.
- providing education and training to rural Victoria (focusing on bereavement, suicide and suicide bereavement)
- inclusion of 'responding to suicidality' as part of the education and training offered by Support After Suicide
- developed a Support After Suicide website. This is for both bereaved and professionals.

For the financial year 2007-2008, the participants in programs provided by Support After Suicide included:

- counselling program participants: 219
- new referrals to the counselling program: 122
- education/information sessions conducted: 24
- participants in education/information sessions: 422
- number of support groups held: 4
- number of participants in groups: 27

The number of counselling and group work clients has resulted in the staff at Support After Suicide developing a high level of clinical expertise in understanding, articulating and working with the issues and experiences of those who are bereaved by suicide.

Some additional developments:

- developed a monthly, professionally facilitated, support group
- developing training and facilitation manuals for three of the groups: 8 week support group, monthly group and parent support group
- developing a 'best practice' service model for responding to the suicide bereaved.

There are some activities which are under development for the next 3-4 months:

- web page for young people
- reviewing and revising Information Sheets and group programs to ensure cultural sensitivity and relevance to the indigenous community.

All aspects of the program have been evaluated: we continually receive excellent evaluations for group programs and also 90-100% satisfaction with education. This includes an assessment of the education as: practical, increasing awareness and increasing capacity to respond to suicide bereavement.