

The Problem of Suicide in Jails and Prisons

"Suicide continues to be a leading cause of death in jails across the country; the rate of suicide in county jails is estimated to be several times greater than that in the general population."

"The data indicate that inmate suicide is no longer centralized to the first 24 hours of confinement and can occur at any time during an inmate's confinement... Because inmates can be at risk for suicide at any point during confinement, the biggest challenge for those who work in the corrections system is to view the issue as requiring a continuum of comprehensive suicide prevention services aimed at the collaborative identification, continued assessment, and safe management of inmates at risk for self-harm."

Excerpts from the U.S. Department of Justice, National Institute of Corrections National Study of Jail Suicide 20 Years Later (2010)

Suicide is considered to be a "missed opportunity" in preventing it. Someone knew something about someone and did not say anything. Completed suicides and suicide attempts not only affect the victim but fellow inmates, family, especially inmates' children, friends and the prison community for a lifetime. At the RIDOC, suicide prevention is everyone's business and works best when everyone - administration, correctional officers, staff and inmates work together.

If you have knowledge of a fellow inmate who is suicidal, tell someone!

What is LifeLine?

Originally started in 1989, Lifeline is a partnership of the RIDOC and The Samaritans of RI, the state's most trusted name in suicide prevention.

LifeLine is a peer to peer befriending program designed to provide new inmates with information which will help to lessen their anxiety, which is a result of incarceration and to serve as a peer outreach, awareness and referral for treatment effort before inmates become suicidal.

LifeLine is an in-jail, nonreligious fellowship of volunteers including inmates and The Samaritans. LifeLine is dedicated to the alleviation of hopelessness, loneliness and depression that can lead to suicide by making befriending available to those who believe they have no other person to turn to in their distress.

Inmates of all ages also talk to LifeLiners when they just need someone to listen.

Trained in nonjudgmental listening by The Samaritans of RI, LifeLiner inmate volunteers provide free, confidential, nonjudgmental befriending to the hopeless, alone, suicidal, grieving, infirmed, stressed by worry.

LifeLine does not replace professional medical, mental health, social service or pastoral care. However, a LifeLiner can provide supportive services between appointments or when family and friends are not available.

LifeLine is volunteer based and is not a medical or social service program. Inmates in need of medical attention, whether physical or psycho/social will be referred to the medical department for care.

LifeLine is not a spiritual or religious organization. LifeLiners, whatever their personal beliefs, are strictly forbidden from making any attempt to convert fellow inmates or exploit fellow inmates in distress by using the opportunity to witness the LifeLiner's beliefs. Fellow inmates asking for spiritual or religious help of any kind will be referred, with the inmate's permission, to the RIDOC chaplaincy program.

There are no special privileges associated with LifeLine. Instead, inmates train to become LifeLine volunteers out of a desire to help others instead of a desire to gain special privileges or "good time."

No promises or expectations of continuing befriending can be made after an inmate leaves the prison. Rather, working with the DOC, every effort will be made to tell the person of other community resources.

**DEPRESSION IS TREATABLE.
SUICIDE IS PREVENTABLE
BUT YOU HAVE TO ASK
FOR HELP!**

**HOPELESS?
NEED TO TALK?
TALK TO A LIFELINER!**

LIFELINE SUICIDE PREVENTION REFERRAL CHECKLIST

Medical Emergency

Notify the nearest Correctional Officer, Block Supervisor or any RIDOC personnel.

Non-Emergency Options

Notify a Correctional Officer or Block Supervisor who will arrange for an medical assessment, follow-up care and treatment.

Encourage fellow inmates who have knowledge of someone who is suicidal to notify a LifeLiner.

Concerns about Children and Families

Notify a Correctional Officer or Block Supervisor who will arrange for contact with ReEntry Services/Parent Coordinator.

Recognize the Connection!

Often times, health and behavioral health problems happen at the same time impacting upon each other and inmate can feel depressed. Changes in medications or diet, stress, lifestyle issues or previously undiagnosed medical problems can also impact on your mental and physical well being. If you or someone you know is suffering from depression, write a list of your concerns, observations, past and current medical issues and health care challenges as well as any thoughts of depression and suicide. Share your concerns with a Correctional Officer, Block Supervisor or other RIDOC personnel.

Coordinated Care!

While at the RIDOC, the office of the Medical Director is your medical home. The best care is coordinated care between the primary care staff and the behavioral health staff. Encourage fellow inmates to tell staff of both programs his/her list of concerns and observations about themselves or fellow inmates.

Stay Connected!

Staying connected to family, friends and the inmate community is an important component of any suicide prevention and treatment program. Encourage fellow inmates to take part in RIDOC prison programs – family, faith based, recreational, volunteer, educational, library, etc.

*In Prison? Need to talk?
Contact a LifeLiner. Ask your Correctional Officer of
Block Supervisor.*

*Out of prison or have a family member who is
hopeless and needs to talk?
Suggest they call
The Samaritans. (401) 272-4044
or state-wide at 1-800-365-4044.
The Samaritans' hotline is open 24/7 depending on
the daily availability of volunteers.*

****If someone is at immediate risk of suicide,
please notify the nearest Correctional Officer
or Block Supervisor!***



LifeLine Inmate Volunteer Program

*LifeLiner volunteers
care...listen...help!*

Established in 1977, The Samaritans of RI remains the state's most trusted name in suicide prevention. The LifeLine program was established in 1989.