

The Ecological Approach: Looking at individuals within a larger context

Connect uses an ecological approach as its theoretical basis. The Ecological Approach looks at individuals within a larger context. While suicide incidents are generally the act of an individual, they occur in the context of the individual's interpersonal relationships, tribe, community, larger society and culture in which we live.

Certainly the suicide death of an individual can profoundly impact family, friends, coworkers and the community (and beyond for well-known, or high profile deaths) as well. **Effective sustainable change to reduce risk of suicide requires working across multiple systems.** Therefore, Connect encourages a comprehensive approach to suicide prevention that promotes community-based efforts and addresses suicide prevention at the national, state, community levels, as well as the individual.

At the *National Level*, Connect adheres to the principles and goals of the National Strategy for Suicide Prevention and has worked to incorporate many of its objectives. Connect utilizes evidence-based practices for suicide prevention, intervention and postvention.

At the *State Level*, Connect is guided by individual state suicide prevention plans and strives to impact state agencies, policies and legislation to promote suicide prevention.

At the *Community Level* (town, campus, reservation or other geographic region), the focus is on helping communities to identify risk and protective factors and to bring the community and key stakeholders together to improve the response to suicide incidents. Also important is to promote community strength and resiliency that can reduce risk of suicide and increase healthy behaviors, access to services and a safety net for those at risk.

Suicide prevention does not just belong to single systems such as mental health or schools. A community that embraces the idea that everyone has a responsibility for preventing suicide will develop a successful safety net for individuals at risk. Beyond each job role, the responsibility for suicide prevention continues--everyone is a gatekeeper for family, friends, neighbors, colleagues, and other community members.