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Higher Education Mental Health Alliance Releases Guide to Assist Colleges with Response to Suicide on Campus

New Suicide Postvention Resource Available for Colleges and Universities to Help Plan for and Respond to Tragedies on Campus

NEW YORK, NY, November 18, 2014—The Higher Education Mental Health Alliance (HEMHA), a partnership of organizations dedicated to providing leadership to advance college mental health, today announced the release of *Postvention: A Guide for Response to Suicide on College Campuses (Postvention Guide)*, an answer to the imperative need for strategies to help colleges and universities effectively and sensitively respond to campus deaths, should they occur.

Suicide is the second leading cause of death among college studentsⁱ. Tragically, after hearing about a suicide death, those who are already at risk for suicidal behavior may be at increased risk for self-harm. There are multiple factors which might increase or help to reduce risk,ⁱⁱ making a school's reaction vitally important. The *Postvention Guide* offers suggestions for best practices to facilitate the grieving and adjustment process, stabilize the environment, reduce the risk of negative behaviors, and limit the risk of further suicides through contagion. The guide defines specific areas of consideration and planning, such as strategic planning, communications with students, faculty, family and media, as well as clinical interventions.

HEMHA's higher education and mental health experts, who have first-hand experience with campus suicide, came together to create this crucial new resource to help all college and university professionals navigate one of the most difficult challenges a campus community can face. Contributors to the guide's content include HEMHA partners American College Counseling Association (ACCA), American College Health Association (ACHA), American College Personnel Association (ACPA), American Psychiatric Association (APA), American Psychological Association (APA), Association for University and College Counseling Directors (AUCCCD), The Jed Foundation, and NASPA – Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education.

"It's our hope that with this guide, schools will be better prepared to manage the painful challenge of a student suicide," said Dan Jones, Chair of HEMHA and Past President of the Association for University and College Counseling Center Directors (AUCCCD). "While the guide is intended to help schools put systems in place, we have tried to make it concise enough to also assist a school that has not yet developed a strategy. We aim to help any schools in the midst of a crisis, needing to rapidly implement a response plan."

In the aftermath of a student suicide, when emotions and tensions are high, a well-implemented postvention plan can significantly help to guide the university in communicating with multiple campus stakeholders, responding to campus needs and caring for the campus community.

The *Postvention: A Guide for Response to Suicide on College Campuses* can be [found here](#).

Learn more about HEMHA [here](#).

About the Higher Education Mental Health Alliance (HEMHA)

Envisioned and formed in September 2008 under the leadership of the American College Health Association (ACHA), the Higher Education Mental Health Alliance (HEMHA) is a partnership of organizations dedicated to providing leadership to advance college mental health. The Alliance affirms that the issue of college mental health is central to student success, and therefore is the responsibility of higher education. Through focus on **advocacy** actions, **policy** development and review, **practice** dissemination, and the promotion of **research** across the mental health continuum – HEMHA is committed to advancing mental health throughout the realm of higher education and improving student recruitment, retention and learning outcomes.

HEMHA Partners:

American College Counseling Association (ACCA)

American College Health Association (ACHA)

American College Personnel Association (ACPA)

American Psychiatric Association (APA)

American Psychological Association (APA)

Association for University and College Counseling Directors (AUCCCD)

The Jed Foundation

Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education (NASPA)

ⁱ http://www.sprc.org/sites/sprc.org/files/library/college_sp_whitepaper.pdf

ⁱⁱ Velting & Gould, 1997