



LIVINGWORKS

SUICIDE INTERVENTION SKILLS TRAINING

Schools Evidence Summary



Document prepared by LivingWorks Australia

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LivingWorks is Australia's leading suicide intervention skills training organisation.

We acknowledge the traditional custodians of the lands on which we live and work, lands where sovereignty was never ceded. We pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging and we extend respect and thanks to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities who have contributed time and knowledge to the development of LivingWorks I-ASIST and safeYARN programs.





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Suicide intervention skills training for Teachers, support staff, parents/carers, senior students and school communities

Teachers and parents/carers are well-placed to observe suicide warning signs, monitor risk, encourage alternative coping strategies, provide emotional support, and facilitate young people to engage with mental health and suicide prevention services ^(1; 2; 3; 4).

However, research indicates that many teachers and parent/carers' suicide-related knowledge, and confidence in their ability to intervene, is lacking ^(3; 5; 6; 7; 8; 9).

Empowerment of teachers and parents/carers and through suicide education has been demonstrated to be effective in addressing this issue, resulting in increased identification of young people at risk of suicide as well as increased referrals to services ^(2; 3; 4; 10; 11; 12; 13; 14; 15).

LivingWorks Education Australia (LivingWorks) is uniquely placed to deliver population-level suicide prevention training supporting youth. LivingWorks is:

1. **Unique:** The developer and owner of the only co-designed and evaluated, schools-based Australian program of its kind.
2. **Evidence-Based:** The leading evidence-based provider in the field with more than 60 peer-reviewed studies and evaluations conducted on our programs, including a study conducted in 2017 by Orygen on safeTALK in Schools. ^(16; 17).
3. **NESA accreditation:** LivingWorks ASIST, safeTALK and Start are accredited in the priority area of Student/child Mental health addressing standard descriptor 4.1.2 from the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers towards maintaining Proficient Teacher Accreditation in NSW.
4. **Local to NSW:** A local provider with an experienced workforce, leadership and training infrastructure, including a robust quality assurance team to support governance and fidelity.
5. **Capable to deliver at scale:** An established Train the Trainer model and trainers ready and available throughout NSW.

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Start

SUICIDE INTERVENTION SKILLS TRAINING for Parents/Carers, select year 10-12 Student peer leaders and wider School community

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Start



60-90 minute online course

What is LivingWorks Start?

Prepare trainees to recognise when someone is having thoughts of suicide, engage that person, and connect that person to further help, such as a LivingWorks ASIST trainee or a community/organisation's mental health provider. LivingWorks Start features interactive elements and simulations designed to help support learning and provide ongoing access to refreshers and practice after the training. Evidence shows that LivingWorks Start improves trainee skills, knowledge and confidence to intervene.

Can be completed in a facilitated session (conducted by LivingWorks online) or independently at the participant's own pace.

Evidence for LivingWorks Start:

LivingWorks Start is evidence informed – written and developed based on best practice in the areas of suicidology, adult education and e-learning principles, as well as our learnings from over 35 years of delivering suicide training in communities around the world.

- Several stages of testing were completed during development across Australia, the USA and Canada which included:
 - Language and concept testing to ensure the core content was clear and relevant to learners

- Early user prototype testing
- Pilot sessions (including focus groups with Australian Defence Force members)
- Full scale user tests covering a range of demographics, locations and occupations before release, including consultation with key partners such as Lifeline and PHN representatives
- Initial analysis of formal research findings has been completed by Dr Laura Shannonhouse of Georgia State University⁽¹⁸⁾.

Demonstrated to be safe and effective for trainees as young as 15 years old

There are examples reported in many countries of suicide behaviours in young children and adolescents. This demonstrates there is a need to safely and appropriately address the issue of suicide with children from the age of 15. The curriculum used in LivingWorks Start is consistent with that taught in LivingWorks safeTALK and LivingWorks ASIST, yet explored at a more foundational level.

LivingWorks Start meets U.S Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration Tier III evidence based training criteria

- LivingWorks Start has been subject to independent evaluation⁽¹⁹⁾ by a panel of peer-reviewed PhD researchers:
 - Dr Laura R. Shannonhouse (Georgia State University),
 - Dr. Nikki Elston (Wake Forest University),
 - Dr Yung-Wei "Dennis" Lin (New Jersey City University), and
 - Dr Casey Barrio Minton (University of Tennessee Knoxville).
- This independent evaluation states that the LivingWorks Start training is "most appropriate for use as a brief, interactive community training to increase awareness of suicide and develop basic skills at intervening with someone who is considering suicide". Their assessment concludes with the assertion that "our judgement is that LivingWorks Start is appropriate for inclusion as an "evidence-based" program under the third definition of SAMHSA guidelines"⁽¹⁸⁾.



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safeTALK

SUICIDE INTERVENTION SKILLS TRAINING

for Teachers, Support staff and select year 10-12 Student peer leaders



Three hour, face to face course

What is LivingWorks safeTALK?

Prepares participants to become suicide alert by using four basic TALK steps to help people with thoughts of suicide. Participants learn how to recognise and engage a person who might be having thoughts of suicide, to confirm if thoughts of suicide are present, and to move quickly to connect the person with helpers who know how to complete the helping process. LivingWorks safeTALK is meant for anyone age 15 and older who wants to promote suicide safety, regardless of previous experience or background. The program is NESAC accredited.

Evidence for LivingWorks safeTALK (and safeTALK Schools):

- The safeTALK program has been evaluated with young people (16; 17) and a variety of adult populations ^(20; 21; 22; 23).
- Findings show that LivingWorks safeTALK increases participant's knowledge about suicide, confidence in discussing suicide related issues, and willingness to seek help for suicidal thoughts ^(16; 17; 18; 20; 21; 22; 23; 19).
- Additionally, the program has not been shown to induce suicidal thoughts and the majority of participants do not report finding the training upsetting ^(16; 17).
- The majority of participants state that they would recommend the training to a friend ^(16; 17).
- In 2018/19 Orygen and LivingWorks partnered with young people to co-design youth-friendly videos and training materials for safeTALK and ASIST.
- Youth advisors gave feedback on existing resources before a national sample of young people responded to a survey that informed the language, settings, characters and relationships depicted in the safeTALK Schools materials.

- As a result, new videos were filmed featuring young Australian actors in settings such as schools, sports clubs and universities, and for the first time, depicting conversations and interactions occurring via text and social media.
- Further consultation took place during 2020 to adapt the workshop activities to be more engaging for young people.
- This unique Australian co-designed suite of youth friendly resources is continuing to be evaluated as part of an NHMRC funded multimodal approach to suicide prevention in selected schools.
- Orygen study: The Multimodal Approach to Preventing Suicide in Schools (MAPSS) project aimed to reduce suicide risk and increase help-seeking among young people, via an integrated program delivered to students and teachers in schools across north-west Melbourne (24). MAPSS Study evaluated the delivery of SafeTALK to Year 10 students. ASIST training was also offered to school staff (but not evaluated as part of this project)
 - [Link to the recruiting page of the MAPSS study.](#)
 - [Link to the MAPSS Study Flyer](#)
 - NB: Orygen have completed the PERSYST Pilot study which evaluated parents (127 participants) who undertook START training. This study is in the processes of analysis and final reporting at the time of this document creation.

safeTALK improves trainee skills, knowledge, readiness and confidence

Evidence exists from the delivery of safeTALK in school settings that safeTALK can be delivered to teenagers as young as 15 through to adults, with no iatrogenic effects apparent ⁽¹⁶⁾. SafeTALK delivered in a school setting demonstrates increased: knowledge about suicide; confidence and willingness to talk about suicide; and likelihood of help-seeking among participants ⁽¹⁶⁾.

There is no evidence that safeTALK training induces suicidal thoughts or causes distress, instead suicide thoughts and stress decreased following training (16). The majority of participants reported safeTALK training as worthwhile and worthy of recommendation to friends. There is consistency of the concepts and curriculum between LivingWorks Start and other LivingWorks programs. Positive feedback from teen- participants in the piloting of LivingWorks Start has informed the safety and necessity of offering training to 15 year olds.

To verify these initial findings, a pilot of 13 year old participants taking LivingWorks Start (with parental guidance) is currently underway. Pending the full results of this pilot, it will be possible to extrapolate that LivingWorks Start is safe and effective for trainees 13+ years of age.



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ASIST

SUICIDE INTERVENTION SKILLS TRAINING

for School counsellors and select Teachers, Support staff



Two day, face to face course

What is LivingWorks ASIST?

An interactive workshop in suicide first aid. LivingWorks ASIST (Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training) helps increase participant skills and confidence to intervene with someone **with thoughts** of suicide. There is no prerequisite to attend—anyone can learn suicide intervention skills. Trainers facilitate participant involvement and help participants build confidence and skills. The training includes trainer presentations, small-group learning, high quality audio-visual and practice scenarios, and interactive discussions and questions.

Evidence for LivingWorks ASIST:

- Numerous studies have found that ASIST training improves trainees' skills, knowledge, and readiness to intervene. These studies have used both self-assessment (i.e. how prepared trainees felt to respond pre- and post-training) and objective measures (i.e. how well trainees performed on skill tests pre- and post-training).^(25; 26)
- Evidence of improved suicide prevention outcomes and reduced suicide rates : ASIST training has led to improved outcomes for people with thoughts of suicide and has reduced suicide rates in organisations and communities where the training has been consistently and strategically applied⁽²⁷⁾.
- Training shown to increase general counselling and listening skills: While the primary focus of ASIST training is suicide prevention, evidence suggests that the training also improves

generic counselling, listening, and leadership skills. This is because LivingWorks training focuses on empathising with others, listening to them, and understanding their needs in order to keep them safe. Many organisations have found that their culture shifted to be more resilient and supportive after training.

- A recent study (upcoming publication) found that LivingWorks training helped people feel more ready to provide support in a variety of areas—even when the issue wasn't about suicide. The study shows that the core competencies and processes of the LivingWorks programs yield substantial benefits for counselling relationships in general.
- Title of this yet to be published study: "Intervention potential of community-based suicide prevention programs." Author: Mize MC.

ASIST in the School setting:


- Published in the Journal of Counselling and Development, a 2017 study found that ASIST-trained school staff, including teachers and counsellors, saw improved knowledge and competencies on an objective scale (SIRI-2) compared to a control group. The areas of improvement included suicide intervention skills, attitudes toward suicide, knowledge of suicide, and comfort, competence, and confidence in responding to individuals at risk. The authors wrote that their findings provide "support for the use of ASIST in schools, particularly those in rural areas with limited access to mental health services."⁽²⁸⁾
- In addition to this, study published in the Journal of American College Health examined the impact of ASIST training for college staff including faculty, counsellors, administrators, and other support personnel. The results showed improvement in both self-assessed competencies and objective measures using the SIRI-2 scale compared to a control group. Areas of improvement included suicide intervention skills, attitudes toward suicide, knowledge of suicide, and comfort, competence, and confidence in responding to individuals at risk. The authors wrote: "these results agree with others that show ASIST increases SI- [suicide intervention] skills."⁽²⁹⁾



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I-ASIST | safeYARN

SUICIDE INTERVENTION SKILLS TRAINING for Indigenous Teachers, support staff and broader school community

 Two day, face to face course

What is LivingWorks I-ASIST?

Indigenous Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (I-ASIST) builds on the success of the existing LivingWorks ASIST program - the global standard in suicide prevention training. I-ASIST was co-designed with Indigenous leadership and consultation, specifically for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. Led by Professor Maree Toombs, proud Euralie and Kooma woman from the University of Queensland, I-ASIST trains people to help identify people with suicide thoughts early and use their skills to develop an individualised safety plan.

 Three hour face-to-face course

What is LivingWorks safeYARN?

safeYARN is a half day suicide prevention workshop developed with Indigenous communities across Australia, and based on LivingWorks' 3 hour mainstream training – safeTALK. safeYARN provides a culturally relevant framework for identifying a person who may be thinking of suicide, asking that person directly about suicide, and supporting them through their suicidal crisis by linking that person to an I-ASIST trained helper. safeYARN is ideal for community and service providers who would like to learn basic suicide intervention skills.

Evidence for I-ASIST and safeYARN:

- I-ASIST and safeYARN are both adaptations of existing LivingWorks evidence-based programs, that have been co-designed and led, with Indigenous communities to be culturally relevant for Indigenous Australians.
- I-ASIST was supported by a 4 year NHMC research trial, led by Professor Maree Toombs (Associate Dean of Indigenous Engagement at the University of Queensland). The evidence collected as part of this trial demonstrated the program's co-design and effectiveness, leading to a number of peer-reviewed journal publications^{(30) (31)}. The program was officially launched in 2021 by Minister for Indigenous Australians, The Hon Ken Wyatt AM MP.
- safeYARN is underpinned by the safeTALK evidence-base and being evaluated as part of the Alliance Against Suicide Strategy in Queensland, led by the Thompson Institute at the University of Sunshine Coast.



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Faith

SUICIDE INTERVENTION SKILLS TRAINING for Chaplains and Religious leaders



5-6 hours, online delivery depending on the number of practice scenarios the learner chooses to complete.

Whats is LivingWorks Faith?

LivingWorks Faith empowers faith leaders to promote and provide support for suicide prevention, intervention, and postvention in their congregations. LivingWorks Faith provides readiness and confidence to listen and talk with someone experiencing thoughts of suicide or to support families after a suicide death. Blending Scriptural wisdom and proven best practices, LivingWorks Faith is designed for all Christian ministry leaders who want to learn to effectively prevent suicide, intervene with those thinking of suicide, and provide long-term aftercare around the issue of suicide in their congregations.

Can be completed in a facilitated session (conducted by LivingWorks online) or independently at the participant's own pace.

Evidence for LivingWorks Faith:

- LivingWorks Faith is built on a combination of best practice in the field of suicidology, as well as Scriptural wisdom.
- Ordained or lay faith leaders play a pivot role in suicide prevention. Clergy are seen as a source of help, with 25% of people living with mental health disorders or suicide thoughts, plans or behaviours, contacting faith leaders for help. Studies have shown that faith leaders are more likely to be contacted to help with mental health concerns than general medical practitioners or psychiatrists⁽⁵²⁾.
- Clergy also report that people seek their help with thoughts of suicide, with one Australian study showing that 84% of clergy studied had been approached to help individuals living with suicide thoughts⁽⁵³⁾.
- Faith leaders are a key component to community-based suicide prevention as they play many unique roles in addressing suicide. Through preaching, pastoral care, school chaplaincy, conducting funerals⁽⁵⁴⁾, and supporting people left behind after a suicide (survivors) faith leaders can work to facilitate communities that are safer from suicide⁽⁵⁵⁾.
- Despite the critical role clergy can play in suicide prevention, many feel that they lack necessary skills and resources to contribute. Building on the collaborative work of the National Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention, LivingWorks Faith is designed to increase the competency of faith leaders in several key areas including: safety planning, role clarity, confidence, referral, self-care, ministering after a suicide loss, and conducting funerals and memorials^(56,57).

Appendices

Further information on the effectiveness of Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST)

Counselling Students' Experiences Learning How to Assess Youth Suicide Risk. *Journal of Counsellor Preparation and Supervision*,

Gallo, L. L., Miller, R., Doumas, D. M., Midgett, A., & Porchia, S. (2021).

Suicide rates continue to rise in the United States, especially within our youth population. Preparing counsellors to confidently address suicide risk with their clients is crucial in suicide prevention. The authors conducted a phenomenological investigation of a youth suicide prevention course with 10 counselling students. The course included both a didactic component and an experiential component. We extracted four themes suggesting students believe a) suicide assessment is integral to the counsellor role b) suicide is a complex phenomenon; c) the course enhanced self-efficacy; and d) interactive activities supported learning. Implications focusing on the importance of building self-efficacy in risk assessments, incorporating role-plays, and acknowledging the emotions that surround the topic of suicide are provided.

Effectiveness of Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST) in Lithuania

Jurgita Rimkevičienė, Paulius Skruibis & Greta Padroštytė Dec 2020

This study evaluated the effectiveness of the Lithuanian translation of the Applied Suicide Interventions Skills Training (ASIST). In total 248 participants (45.7%) completed pre- and post-assessment and 146 (26.9%) had data at 3-month follow-up. Suicide Intervention Response Inventory (SIRI-2) was used to evaluate suicide intervention skills. The results indicated no change in the overall SIRI-2 score following training or at a 3-month follow-up. A more detailed analysis of the response pattern indicated that both following training and at 3-months follow up participants were better at identifying helpful responses but tended to overestimate their helpfulness.

Validation of the Suicide Counseling Skills Inventory. *Crisis: The Journal of Crisis Intervention and Suicide Prevention*.

Coohy, C., Neblett, K., & Knox, S. (2021)

Background: The self-report measures used in evaluations of the Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST) program have tended not to detect an improvement in a broad range of suicide counselling skills from pre- to post training or among trainees with better skills at pretraining. Aims: The purpose of this study was to develop and validate the Suicide Counselling Skills Inventory (SCSI), which included ten brief counsellor-client scenarios and three counsellor responses to each scenario. Method: Data were collected from several samples to develop and evaluate the SCSI. Trainee scores were subtracted from criterion expert scores to create discrepancy scores. Results: The SCSI detected an improvement in skills from pre- to post training across samples, including among trainees with better skills at pretraining. Internal consistency and test-retest reliability were good. Limitations: The results may not generalise across different training models. Conclusion: Trainee scores were more like expert scores at post training. The SCSI may be useful in evaluating suicide counselling competency. (PsycInfo Database Record (c))

Community Suicide Awareness and Prevention

Pablo A. Jimenez, Walden University 2021

The community-based partner agency in Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training supported by the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline and the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention is the leading evidence-based program that focuses on presenting suicide intervention skills and workshops regularly for community members. The next steps investigate the different

ways suicide can be given a voice and a platform for advocacy that extends beyond the individual.

Preventing suicide in post-secondary students: a scoping review of suicide prevention programs

Black, M.H., Scott, M., Baker-Young, E. et al. . *Eur Child Adolesc Psychiatry* (2021)

Residential advisors who completed ASIST had greater knowledge, attitudes, comfort in talking about suicide, competence and confidence when working with students at-risk compared to a control group.

Analysis of a Standardized Suicide Intervention Training for Counsellor Trainees," *Teaching and Supervision in Counselling: Vol. 1 : Iss. 2 , Article 9*.

Shannonhouse, Laura; Rumsey, Amanda D.; Elston, Nikki; Mize, Mary Chase; Hightower, Jennifer; and Lin, Yung-Wei (2019)

The present study evaluates the impact of an evidence-based suicide intervention model and how pedagogical practices of counsellor education programs may prepare counsellors-in-training (CIT) to respond to clients who are considering suicide. Using content analysis to explore pre and post-training data, the researchers examined the impact of the 14-hour evidence-based Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST) on 54 CITs (76% female, 24% male; 58% White, 20% African American, 11% Latinx/Hispanic, 11% Other), with a mean age of 30 years (SD =8.6). Further data were collected 6 months later, after CITs had the opportunity to utilize suicide intervention skills during their clinical experiences. Content analysis yielded several changes between pre- and post-training data which elucidate the process of suicide intervention skill acquisition. CITs also reported having frequently applied their skills during clinical internship with clients considering suicide. Findings support the use of ASIST in the preparation of future counsellors.

Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training Program (ASIST): An Evaluation of School Counsellor Preparedness for Immediate Suicide Intervention

Davis, Tajah. University of West Georgia. ProQuest Dissertations Publishing, 2019. 27545975.

School counsellors play a dynamic role in addressing concerns of students at-risk of suicide. Fulfilling this role requires the current pedagogy provided to school counsellors be reformed to include best practices involving suicide intervention. As such, establishing a framework to address the increased rates of adolescent suicide is essential to promoting the socio-emotional health and safety of students. This research examined the impact the Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST) program had on school counsellor's ability to address students at immediate risk for suicide. Twenty Professional School Counsellors participated in this mixed method research design in effort to determine influence ASIST had on competency in suicide intervention and situational preparedness for students at-risk of suicide.

Counselors in training identifying and responding to suicidal clients: a matched-control study

Nikki C. Elston , Jennifer L. Rogers , Dennis D. Gilbride & Laura R. Shannonhouse Pages 1-14 | Published online: 10 Oct 2019

Using a matched-control experimental design, this study explored the use of Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST) with fifty-four counsellors in training (CIT). Over the course of 10 weeks CIT self-reported interactions with suicidal clients and their use of counselling skills. Trainees who completed ASIST were significantly more likely to report they had identified and used specific intervention strategies and counselling skills with suicidal clients during sessions. Implications for future training and research are provided.

Additional Evidence for LivingWorks:

As a provider of suicide prevention skills training (gatekeeper training) for a broad range of sectors, including through the NSW Ministry of Health Towards Zero Suicides (TZS) initiatives, LivingWorks has the capacity and infrastructure to provide high-quality training and coordination support across NSW at scale. LivingWorks has:

- 25 years' Australian experience delivering training in education, health, Government, NGOs and community settings.
- Over 50 peer reviewed studies and government reports validating the impact of the suite of programs
- 131 Registered NSW LivingWorks trainers and 15 office staff with plans for further recruitment to fill officer, coordinator and management positions
- Experience coordinating training delivery for seven organisations funded under the TZS Community Gatekeeper Training initiative.
- All programs are based on 'outcome-based education' design and have didactic, simulation and debrief components built into each learning component to drive skills.
- Learning objectives are identifiable and measurable.
- Rigorous science is applied throughout the lifecycle of the product, i.e., predevelopment, development, prototyping and delivery.
- The evidence gathered informs product enhancement or rebuild.
- All products regularly undergo a rigorous curriculum review and refinement process.

In NSW, LivingWorks is contracted to deliver training for the NSW Department of Education (supporting schools in postvention settings with urgent training), Revenue NSW, NSW Department of Communities and Justice, Fire and Rescue NSW, NSW Rural Fire Service, NSW Ambulance and NSW Police.

LivingWorks is currently engaged by several NSW Primary Health Networks for training and is the provider of suicide prevention training for the Australian Defence Force and Open Arms - Veterans and Families Counselling.

Key national and international policy and research frameworks highlighting the necessity of LivingWorks suicide intervention training (including in schools) are:

- World Health Organisation LIVE LIFE: An implementation guide for suicide prevention in countries (June 2021)
- Ireland's HSE National Office for Suicide Prevention (NOSP) was established to strategically lead on suicide prevention. The work of the office has been underpinned by Connecting for Life, Ireland's National Strategy to Reduce Suicide.
 - Full training evaluation report: Connecting for Life Ireland's National Strategy to Reduce Suicide; National Education and Training Plan 2021-2022 (Sept 2021)
 - HSE Connecting for Life: LivingWorks Training information and evaluation 2017-2020 information page
- Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health system (Report February 2021)
- Australian Government Productivity Commission Inquiry Report into Mental Health – (Report 2020)
 - LivingWorks safeTALK schools was the only program for schools about suicide intervention singled out :
- The National Mental Health and Wellbeing Pandemic Response Plan (May 2020);
- The Fifth National Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Plan (the Fifth Plan) (October 2017);
- The Sax Institute Evidence Check: Suicide Prevention in High-Risk Occupation (June 2020) Brokered by the Sax Institute, prepared by Monash University for NSW Ministry of Health,

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