

Working with Pacific communities to reduce suicide in Pacific youth in Wellington, NZ.

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Objectives:

1. To describe a collaborative approach to the reduction of suicide for Pacific youth
2. To give an example of a Pacific model and approach to suicide prevention and mental health promotion

In 2006-2007, following a number of suicides among Pacific youth in Wellington, the mental health promoters at Regional Public Health (RPH) met with key Pacific leaders and health workers in the Wellington, Hutt Valley and Porirua areas. This included: church ministers, DHB representatives, internal RPH Pacific caucus, PHOs, social services, Pacific health services, and Suicide Prevention Information NZ (SPINZ). Feedback from all groups was that there is a need for intervention/action to address the issue of suicide among Pacific youth in Wellington. Many representatives from the above groups agreed to be part of a steering group to guide a Pacific suicide prevention project.

Major themes identified from these discussions as to why suicide might be an issue for Pacific youth include:

- Intercommunication and communication issues
- Relationship break-ups

- Differences in NZ vs Pacific born attitudes and beliefs
- Stigma related to mental health.

Other important feedback included the need for approaches to include the family, and the vital roles of church and Pacific youth leaders. Community forums were identified as one approach through which to disseminate information and allow for dialogue.

The project focuses on capacity building for Pacific community leaders and key workers across the Wellington region to establish safe and effective initiatives that promote mental health and well-being, and reduce the risk of suicidal behaviour. This includes supporting Pacific communities to develop their own definitions and models of Pacific mental health promotion.

Recommendations:

1. 'That Mental Health promotion interventions appropriately reflect Pacific people's realities and values and that they have had the opportunity for participation'
2. 'To create roles for Pacific people to act as a resource to encourage collaboration across government sectors and to provide advice and leadership with workforce development'

