

# **AFSP STRATEGIC IMPACT PLAN**

**Adopted by the National Board of Directors**

**December 2016**

## **VISION**

A world without suicide

## **MISSION**

To save lives and bring hope to those affected by suicide

## **CORE VALUES**

- Impact-driven
- Evidence-based
- Relentless
- Compassionate
- Open minded
- Inclusive
- Transparent

## **OVERARCHING GOAL**

Reduce the annual rate of suicide in the U.S. by 20% by 2025

## **POSITIONING STATEMENT**

AFSP is the voluntary health organization that gives those affected by suicide a nationwide community empowered by research, education and advocacy to take action against this leading cause of death.

## **GOALS, OBJECTIVES AND STRATEGIES**

### **RESEARCH**

**Goal:** Advance the body of scientific knowledge needed to reduce the rate of suicide and assist those affected.

**Objective 1:** Significantly increase resources expended on suicide research, including funding for prevention and postvention.

**Strategies:**

- Expand resources within AFSP to increase funds for suicide research

- Collaborate proactively with the Advocacy and Public Policy function to support increased public sector funding of suicide research
- Cultivate funding of young investigators and grow the community of scientists dedicated to suicide prevention and suicide bereavement research

Objective 2: Expand the scope of AFSP's funded research across the spectrum of suicide and suicide prevention science.

Note: This includes epidemiology and psychosocial risk factors associated with suicide, underlying causal mechanisms, impact on those affected by a suicide loss or attempt, and design and testing of preventive interventions at the individual, practice, service system, and broader community levels

Strategies:

- Continue to offer grant funding mechanisms that encourage innovative research in the U.S. and abroad
- Engage a broad range of scientific disciplines and stakeholders in the work of AFSP, including the Scientific Council
- Provide multi-modal educational opportunities on suicide research methodology to investigators

Objective 3: Increase the impact of both AFSP and externally funded suicide research by improving its quality, breadth and depth.

Strategies:

- Establish priorities based on potential impact, stakeholder interests (i.e., survivors, LGBTQ, military), and under-explored areas
- Utilize data on the burden of suicide (i.e., the impact of suicide as measured by financial cost, mortality, morbidity or other indicators) to expand focus on pathways (areas of study) identified as having the potential to substantively and rapidly reduce suicide
- Utilize the National *Prioritized Research Agenda for Suicide Prevention* developed by the Research Task Force of the Action Alliance to allocate funding to areas that will make the most positive impact on attempts and deaths
- Encourage research collaborations by developing ways to assist and incentivize the acquisition and sharing of data around goals that cannot otherwise be achieved including increasing opportunities to fund research in partnership with other appropriate organizations
- Work with public and private suicide research funders and the CDC to strengthen the availability of suicide burden information for use in planning research

- Translate research findings, engage scientific advisors in helping to advance the public's understanding, and collaborate with the Public Relations and Communications function in the dissemination of findings to AFSP's constituent groups and the public
- Set up targeted programs to better be able to fund a more diverse group of researchers
- Ensure that the types of research funded are broad and consider the gaps (i.e. program implementation science)

**Objective 4:** Increase integration of research results and use of researchers throughout the organization's major priority areas

**Strategies**

- Provide AFSP researchers with opportunities to educate the public at chapter events and through other means such as webinars
- Include evidence-based aspects of suicide prevention and findings from AFSP-funded research in educational programs and activities

## **EDUCATION AND PROGRAMS**

**Prevention Goal:** Reduce the rate of suicide through broadly distributed, high-quality, evidence-based prevention programs and the use of best practices.

**Objective 1:** Systematically assess existing programs for quality, utilization, and impact.

**Strategies:**

- Evaluate all existing AFSP programs by June 2019, and utilize results to continue, improve or discontinue programs
- Incorporate rigorous program evaluations either by adding an internal evaluation system or through more systematic outsourcing

**Objective 2:** Develop new or revised evidence-based prevention programs.

**Strategies:**

- Utilize research and marketing data to improve existing programs and to prioritize potential programs to educate the public about suicide, mental health and brain illnesses, risk factors, and prevention
- Incorporate outcomes evaluation in all new programs during development and use results to determine program effectiveness

Objective 3: Optimize chapter delivery of programs, increasing the number of evidence-based prevention programs delivered by chapters by 10% annually through June 2019.

Strategies:

- Annually assess program utilization/outcomes of programs delivered by chapters
- Streamline and improve program ease of use by chapters by increasing web based training
- Develop strategies to optimize the utilization of highest quality existing programs, such as *More Than Sad: the Truth about Teen Depression*
- Collaboratively identify best practice methods for school utilization of the *More Than Sad* program, including approaching non-participating or formerly participating schools and school districts

Objective 4: Develop meaningful alternative indicators vs. only measuring the rate of suicide

Strategies:

- Consider other indicators such as changes in knowledge, attitudes, behaviors and policy
- Measure appropriate indicators for the evaluation of AFSP programs

**Intervention Goal: Reduce suicide attempts and completed suicides through intervention programs that provide effective help for people at risk for suicide.**

Objective 1: Develop strategies for targeting those at greatest risk.

Strategies:

- Develop culturally sensitive messaging and programs appropriate to target populations (i.e. ,military, Native American and LGBTQ)
- Develop messaging and programs to reach middle-aged and older white males

Objective 2: Continue to support and promote the Interactive Screening Program (ISP) and increase its utilization by 15% annually through June 2019.

Strategies:

- Maintain focus on ISP in academic settings, and increase focus on non-academic settings (i.e., corporate, military, healthcare, other occupational settings)
- Implement semi-annual data tracking and reporting mechanisms for ISP participation, and communicate results to chapters, Scientific Council, Board, and all relevant constituent groups for feedback

Objective 3: Expand intervention programming to new target populations

Strategies:

- Develop appropriate and effective program(s) for suicide attempt survivors
- Develop an educational product for the suicide loss survivor community to promote understanding of issues associated with suicide attempts
- Develop culturally appropriate programs for diverse populations

**Suicide Loss Survivor Goal: Support those affected by suicide loss through effective programs and services to aid the journey of healing and recovery.**

Objective 1: Provide effective, well-utilized suicide bereavement programs.

Strategy:

- Continually evaluate, maintain, improve or discontinue programs based on utilization data and effectiveness metrics

Objective 2: Grow International Survivors of Suicide Loss Day by 10% annually in terms of sites and participants.

Strategies:

- Increase first-time attendees
- Use evaluation data to continuously improve the quality of the program
- Ensure that the program serves the needs of both long term survivors (those who have moved beyond the initial period of recovery) and the newly bereaved. Alternatively, develop distinct programs for each audience
- Increase the engagement of program participants with AFSP, as chapter volunteers and field advocates

Objective 3: Reduce suicide risk among the newly bereaved through increased use of educational programs for first responders, hospital emergency department personnel, clergy, and funeral home staff.

Strategy:

- Evaluate, enhance and improve utilization of the Suicide Loss Survivor Outreach Program with the goal of increasing the number of outreach contacts 10% annually through June 2019
- Improve the quality of the Survivor Outreach Program through better training of outreach volunteers

Objective 4: Develop a National Suicide Loss Survivor Conference and /or other programs to engage and address the needs of the long term bereaved.

Strategies:

- Hold an inaugural conference in Fall 2015 or Spring 2016 with 250 participants
- Evaluate the program and develop a next steps strategy

## **ADVOCACY AND PUBLIC POLICY**

**Goal: Be the leader and catalyst for successful data driven public policy at the federal, state and local level, and provide a unified voice/face for action to prevent suicide.**

Objective 1: Align public policy suicide prevention efforts among appropriate national health organizations to reduce the number of deaths by suicide.

Strategies:

- Engage and partner with national mental health and other health groups to support specific AFSP policy objectives
- Increase appropriate partnerships/relationships
- Incorporate local collaboration efforts through chapters

Objective 2: Develop and implement healthcare policy changes to help AFSP reach its 2025 goal of reducing suicide by 20%

Strategies:

- Hold a Public Policy Council retreat in early 2017 to integrate Project 2025 objectives into the 2017 -2018 Public Policy agenda
- Engage AFSP chapters, federal and state governments, accrediting bodies, professional associations and leaders from other industry sectors to develop and adopt policies that address the four core Project 2025 areas
- Develop collaborative public policy initiatives to support Project 2025

Objective 3: Align AFSP national and chapter suicide prevention agenda and initiatives.

Strategies:

- Leverage annual AFSP Chapter Leadership Conference to develop strategies and plans for collaborations between AFSP Chapters and state/local mental health and other health organizations
- Establish fully functioning Public Policy Councils within all chapters
- Develop and implement regional public policy training including more web based training for chapters and other local collaborators

**Objective 4:** Promote suicide prevention funding and policies at the national and state level.

**Strategies:**

- Expand the annual Allies in Action recognition event and awards ceremony held in conjunction with the Advocacy Forum in Washington
- Assess costs/benefits of establishing a 501(c)(4) Political Action Committee to support political candidates from all parties who take a leadership position in support of suicide prevention and make recommendation to the Board
- Expand state Capitol Days to all 50 states, with priority given first to states with high suicide rates, suicide deaths and/or chapter capacity within a state
- Provide education, training, information and support to enable chapters to be leaders and catalysts in state and local suicide prevention and mental health policy and legislative efforts
- Expand and maintain active and engaged field advocate network, while evaluating and improving recruitment, training and retention

## **COMMUNICATIONS**

**Goal:** Promote the hopeful message that suicide *can* be prevented.

**Objective 1:** Build a communications infrastructure that effectively meets evolving organizational needs through proactive communications.

**Strategies:**

- Develop a case of support
- Conduct a comprehensive situation analysis and needs assessment of organization-wide communications staffing, products, and processes, and develop solutions incorporating both internal and external resources
- Develop a comprehensive, two-way, internal communications function that fosters collaborative work across the organization
- Strengthen the communications capabilities of the chapter network and develop training and systems to ensure accountability for content, implementation and follow-up
- Continually assess the effectiveness of internal and external messaging, training and tools using best practices and metrics to ensure continuous improvement
- Finalize and roll out rebranding program if adopted by the Board

Objective 2: Create a comprehensive marketing strategy and communications plan to publicize and promote AFSP's products and programs, and raise AFSP's profile as the 'go-to' organization for suicide prevention and a trusted and respected source of reliable, understandable scientific and medical information.

Strategies:

- Develop unified internal and external messaging, including key messages on the quality and effectiveness of AFSP's research and programs
- Develop new methods to inform stakeholders about promising research developments and proven suicide interventions, and enhance and elevate our national presence as the leading private funder for suicide prevention research
- Create culturally sensitive messaging to diverse populations
- Continually evaluate, improve and expand the AFSP website's use as the primary source of information on suicide, its prevention and on suicide bereavement
- Significantly increase AFSP's presence on social media
- Promote National Board Members to chapter network through monthly profiles
- Build internal and external programs to better integrate/showcase researchers
- Create a means to take advantage of the young base of users on AFSP's social media outlets

Objective 3: Create a national campaign to increase public awareness of the causes of suicide and the interventions that help to prevent it.

Strategies:

- Explore a national public service campaign, possibly in collaboration with another organization(s)
- Communicate strategic plan updates on a semi-annual basis to staff and volunteers
- Generate a national conversation about prevention, based in science and delivered through compelling, hopeful personal stories, to decrease the stigma surrounding mental health disorders
- Measure current levels of public knowledge and beliefs about suicide, mental health disorders, treatments, prevention, and suicide interventions; establish baseline metrics; and test, measure and revise messages based on iterative experience and research findings

Objective 4: Develop and implement a community relations strategy to expand existing partnerships and to build new constituency relationships using diverse communication channels and methods.



Strategies:

- Expand outreach to new domestic and international constituencies, including cultivating collaborations with new partners to enhance our messages
- Develop a targeted plan for engaging public health communications professionals in AFSP's work
- Translate key AFSP materials into multiple languages and obtain underwriting to provide these at no cost to various audiences
- Implement chapter training program on community and constituency relations and develop information sharing mechanisms to help sustain relationships

Objective 5: Provide communications framework for Project 2025

Strategies:

- Develop internal/external messaging to support Project 2025
- Build marketing resources to support growth of Project 2025
- Conduct an ongoing evaluation of new resources and materials needed to implement Project 2025

## **CAPACITY BUILDING**

**Goal: Build organizational capacity to maximally support AFSP's mission, operations, growth and impact while becoming more outcomes oriented.**

Objective 1: Recruit and engage a diverse national board dedicated to AFSP's mission that is knowledgeable, influential, and willing to donate and raise funds.

Strategies:

- Align the board's governance structure and governing documents with the Strategic Plan, and regularly evaluate its governing effectiveness
- Create a board matrix that shows strengths of current board, so that needed areas of expertise can be addressed with the addition of new board members
- Distribute quarterly updates to board members
- Develop a proactive board leadership development and succession planning program, including a formal board orientation program, annual performance evaluation and cultivation of emerging leaders

Objective 2: Attract and retain field and national staff with background and expertise to maximize the organization's effectiveness and impact through optimizing and improving the work environment.

Strategies:

- Ensure that AFSP's compensation structure is competitive through the implementation of a comprehensive philosophy covering internal equity, merit pay increase guidelines and a performance management system
- Provide responsive and effective Human Resources support and services
- Develop self-care educational programs for AFSP staff to promote a culture of caring and resiliency with the goal of improving workforce sustainability and the overall quality of our work
- Increase staff development and training opportunities including increasing web based trainings
- Develop a succession plan for key senior management positions
- Develop a plan to help chapters engage and retain volunteers

Objective 3: Provide chapters with resources to grow and increase their impact.

Strategies:

- Proactively hire more field staff to support growing numbers and activities of chapters
- Provide systems and training to field staff in financial reporting and operational management of chapters
- Work with chapters to help expand involvement of diverse populations
- Provide national staff experts, as well as national administrative and accounting personnel, to support chapter growth and maximize impact
- Create a CEO Field Leadership Team to discuss strategic decision making with chapter leaders

Objective 4: Become data-driven decision makers by identifying and measuring everything that matters.

Strategies:

- Establish and promote a culture that values data and data-driven decisions
- Establish systems to collect, measure and analyze data efficiently and effectively
- Establish ROI assessment processes to evaluate existing and proposed initiatives
- Establish metric based performance plans for staff
- Provide technology training for staff

Objective 5: Buy or build systems and infrastructure sufficient to support organizational growth and the achievement of impact goals.

Strategies:

- Continually update and strengthen the organization's technology base to support the Strategic Plan and evolving operational needs
- Maintain best-practice financial management and reporting processes and standards
- Explore how to best streamline data entry to a single platform

Objective 6: Keep combined management and fundraising expenses to no more than 20% of total expenses.

Strategy:

- Monitor management and fundraising costs on a regular basis

Objective 7: Operationalize both the strategic plan and Project 2025 throughout the organization

Strategies:

- Create an annual work plan and milestones
- Assign/allocate resources necessary to be successful (staff, money, technology, etc.)
- Develop a plan for involving chapters in the implementation of Project 2025
- Monitor and report on progress

Objective 8: Assess pros and cons of beginning to expand AFSP's international presence and organizational structure

Strategy

- Set up task force of Board members to undertake this assessment

## **REVENUE**

**Goal: Expand net revenue from \$12.5 Million to \$25 Million by June 2019 to maximally support AFSP's mission, operations and goal of reducing the suicide rate.**

Objective 1: Increase event fundraising from \$10.2 Million to \$20.4 Million by June 2019.

Strategies:

- Increase net revenue derived from Walk events
- Increase net revenue derived from non-Walk events
- Increase third party revenue events where AFSP is the beneficiary

- Increase net revenue from national fundraising events, e.g. ,Lifesavers Dinner

Objective 2: Increase revenue diversity including raising non-event fundraising revenue from \$2.3 to \$4.6 million by June 2019.

Strategies:

- Strengthen non-event fundraising infrastructure
- Expand chapters' capability to identify and cultivate prospective donors, including training and peer-to-peer fundraising
- Diversify non-event revenue streams, including memorial giving, fee-for-service programs, corporate and foundation giving and product sales
- Leverage national board members and their contacts
- Expand inclusion in existing giving programs (i.e. United Way, Amazon Smiles)

Objective 3: Increase chapter fundraising from 64% to 75% of total revenue by June 2019 while maintaining growth of national programs.

Strategies:

- Attain nationwide coverage by chapters
- Increase staff support to expand chapter fundraising
- Deliver appropriate fundraising training to field staff and chapter volunteers

Objective 4: Make better use of AFSP's existing database for fund raising purposes

Strategies:

- Develop and implement a comprehensive communication program for cultivating names on the list
- Use wealth screening program to identify potential major gift donors
- Investigate new database software

Objective 5: Create and launch a campaign to raise \$3 million by June 30, 2019 in high end gifts to fund for Project 2025. (Note: In addition to the other fundraising targets in the plan.)

Strategies:

- Recruit a campaign committee of leadership gift donors
- Create a campaign case
- Develop and maintain a list of prospective campaign donors
- Secure 100% participation in campaign by AFSP Board of Directors