

Getting started

safeTALK is the result of more than twenty years of experience in developing effective suicide prevention programs. It prepares community members from all backgrounds to become suicide alert by using four basic *TALK* steps to help people with thoughts of suicide. Participants learn how to recognize 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.

safeTALK is meant for anyone who wants to promote suicide safety regardless of previous experience or background. It is especially appropriate for large organizations dealing with many people on a daily basis, such as emergency services, secondary and post-secondary schools, medical settings, law enforcement and the military.

This guide will help you plan, organize and host a *safeTALK* training. For help in locating a *safeTALK* trainer in your area, or for more information and support as an organizer, contact safetalk@livingworks.net.

Overview

safeTALK is meant to be presented by one trainer for up to 30 participants (40, if two trainers are present) over the course of about three and one-half hours. The recommended minimum number of participants is 15. Learning occurs through large and small group discussions, videotaped simulations and practice of the helping steps. Participants are expected to be present for the duration of the training, for which they receive a certificate of completion. While only one trainer is needed, a Community Support Resource should also be present at *safeTALK* to provide support should the need arise. It is expected that this person is skilled in suicide intervention.

A typical *safeTALK* is divided into two main sections with a short break in-between. Light refreshments should be provided during the break. If a meal is to be served, it should be either before or after the training. One trainer could present two three and one-half hour *safeTALK*s in the same day if there is an opportunity for rest and a meal in-between.

Most often presented as a three and one-half hour training program, *safeTALK* can also be expanded to a full day with supplemental materials and exercises to help participants develop a personal plan for resiliency. Your *safeTALK* trainer can provide more information about this option.

Things to consider

Training space and equipment

safeTALK is best presented in a room that affords privacy and that does not carry sound. Theater-style with an even number of chairs per row is best. A table for the audiovisual equipment and trainer's materials should be at the front of the room. A registration table could be set up at the back. Windows should be covered to block excessive light that may obscure visibility of videos or slides.

safeTALK requires either a DVD player and television with a large enough screen to be seen by all participants, or a laptop computer with DVD drive, projector and screen. Adequate speakers are also a necessity. You should check with the trainer to be sure which equipment they prefer to use. Some trainers will bring some or most of the audiovisual equipment required. If you are providing audiovisual equipment, you should check that it is in good running order and that someone is available to help if needed. The trainer will need access to the room and equipment at least one hour early to set up and another 45 minutes after the training.

Participant materials

safeTALK participants receive a 24-page, color *safeTALK* resource book, a wallet card summarizing the helping steps, stickers to help identify them as trained suicide alert helpers and a certificate of completion. Trainers order these participant materials directly from LivingWorks at least three weeks ahead of the training date. You will need to work with your trainer to ensure that enough materials are ordered in adequate time for the training. Please note that LivingWorks does not issue refunds for unused participant materials.

The participant certificates will need to be printed and ready for distribution at or soon after the *safeTALK* training. In some cases the organizer can do this, but most often the trainer will take this responsibility. It is a good idea to discuss this with your trainer when ordering materials.

Trainer fees

There are *safeTALK* trainers in most regions. The LivingWorks office can help you to find a trainer near you. Organizers will need to consult directly with trainers regarding their fees and expenses. In the event that a trainer has to travel to present *safeTALK*, there will be additional costs.

Promotions and registration

As an organizer you will usually be responsible for advertising the training, registering participants and collecting fees. Some suggestions for getting the word out about your *safeTALK* training are: send notices directly to agencies and individuals; post flyers; or advertise in local newspapers, newsletters, mail outs, and community events calendars. You may wish to put out a press release; sample press releases are available

from the LivingWorks office. It is best to advertise at least four to six weeks before your training date. Make sure that all your promotional materials include the date, time and location, and state that participants are expected to arrive on time and to stay for the entire training. To ensure that participants enter the training with realistic expectations, it is also advisable that promotional materials accurately describe safeTALK as a training in the basic steps that begin the helping process for people with thoughts of suicide. Promotional materials that can be customized to advertise your *safeTALK* training have been created by LivingWorks and are available to you.

Checklist for safeTALK organizers

Six to eight weeks before the training

- A decision has been made about whether a three and one-half hour or full-day *safeTALK* training (including supplemental materials) will be presented.
- An agreement has been reached with a *safeTALK* trainer regarding fees and expenses.
- The training date has been set.
- Training space has been reserved.
- Training space can accommodate between 15 and 30 participants (40, if two trainers are present) seated theater-style and has a table at the front of the room for the trainer's audiovisual equipment and materials.
- Training space is sound proof.
- Lighting can be dimmed over the area where the screen will be positioned.
- Window coverings can be adjusted to control light.
- If desired, there is room for a registration table at the rear.
- Promotional materials have been distributed at least four to six weeks prior to the training date.
- In all promotional communications, *safeTALK* is described as a training in the basic steps that begin the helping process for persons with suicide thoughts, and it is stated that participants need to be present for the entire program.
- If it is to be used, the *safeTALK* promotional flyer provided by LivingWorks has been customized, printed and distributed.
- Arrangements have been made to obtain obtain audiovisual equipment as per the trainer's needs, which may include a laptop computer, projector, speakers and a screen or a large screen television.
- Someone has been identified who will act as the Community Support Resource Person and has been connected with the *safeTALK* trainer.

Three to four weeks before the training

- Participants have been notified about the purpose of *safeTALK*.
- Participant materials have been ordered from LivingWorks by your trainer.
- You and your trainer have agreed who will be responsible for printing the participant certificates.
- Refreshments (recommended), have been ordered.
- If a meal is planned, it will be served either before or after the training.
- Registrations, including fees if they are charged, are being collected.