Briefing on the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention

ADAA Conference
Career Development Leadership Program
April 2015
AFSP’s Vision, Position and Bold Goal

**Vision**: A world without suicide

**Position**: Leading the fight to prevent suicide

**Bold Goal**: To reduce the suicide rate in the U.S. by 20% by 2025
AFSP’s approach is comprehensive

- Funds scientific research
- Offers educational programs for professionals
- Educates the public about causes, prevention
- Promotes policies and legislation
- Provides support, information, opportunities for involvement for those bereaved by suicide, people at risk and their families
A sustainable, growing resource

Five Core Strategies

- Research
- Education
- Outreach & Support
- Public Awareness
- Advocacy
Investing in Science

“There is every reason to expect that a national consensus to declare war on suicide and to fund research and prevention at a level commensurate with the severity of the problem will be successful, and will lead to highly significant discoveries as have the wars on cancer, Alzheimer’s disease, and AIDS.”

– Institute of Medicine, Reducing Suicide: A National Imperative (2002)
Research is at the core

- Founded by researchers, families that lost love ones
- Goal was to create a sustainable private source of support for research into suicide
- AFSP is now the leading private funder of suicide research, amount for research growing every year
- Scientific Advisory Council includes 150 leading suicide researchers, staff expertise
AFSP’s current research investment

• Funding 30 new scientific studies per year
• Over $6 million in current research
• Investment into genetic, biological, behavioral factors, and interventions and treatments
• Establishing new fund mechanisms
• RFAs (Focus Grants), larger amounts, longer studies, focus on a priority gap(s)
Creating a movement

- AFSP has a network of 75 chapters, in 45 States
- Organizes 350 annual Out of the Darkness Walks, raising funds, awareness, increasing involvement
- Growing public policy presence in Washington, State Capitals, volunteer advocates in 50 states
- Key role in creating a prioritized research agenda for suicide prevention
The prioritized agenda

• First consensus document on research priorities
• Developed with stakeholder and researcher involvement
• Research objectives across 6 key questions:
  – Why do people become suicidal?
  – How can we better detect/predict risk?
  – What interventions are effective, what prevents someone from engaging in suicidal behavior?
The prioritized agenda

– What services are most effective for treating the suicidal person and preventing suicidal behavior?
– What other types of interventions (outside health care settings) reduce suicide risk?
– What research infrastructure is needed?

• Available at www.suicide-research-agenda.org
• The “agenda“ is being used by AFSP to raise private support for research, advocate for federal research dollars, determine our funding priorities
AFSP Strategic Plan

Goal: Advance the scientific knowledge needed to reduce the suicide rate

• Significantly increase investment in research
• Expand the scope of AFSP’s funded research across the spectrum of suicide prevention
• Increase the impact of AFSP funded research by improving quality, breadth, depth, and communicate results
Next Steps

• We want more researchers to study suicide
• We need more innovation, pilot data
• We encourage more applications
• To tell you more ... Dr. Jill Harkavy-Friedman, VP for Research
AFSP Research Program

• The only research organization that specifically funds research related to suicide
  – Requiring a suicide related outcome in all studies

• Funds innovative research
  – 90+% of AFSP grantees go on to receive larger grants based on data obtained from their AFSP study
Types of Research Supported by AFSP

- Neurobiological studies
- Genetic studies
- Psychosocial studies
- Clinical treatment studies
- Community intervention studies
- Survivors of suicide loss studies
TYPES OF GRANTS

• Distinguished Investigator Grant
• Standard Research Grant
• Young Investigator Grant
• Postdoctoral Research Grant
• Pilot Study Grant
• Linked Standard Research Grant
• Focus Grants
Our researchers

AFSP Funds:

– **Young Investigators** to build a scientific community

– **Senior Investigators** to engage seasoned researchers in suicide prevention

– Suicide researchers at all levels for new ideas
Application process

- Everything you need to know can be found at:

  www.afsp.org

Research Grant Information
AFSP Research Grant

Categories

• **Distinguished Investigator Grants** – funds up to 2 years of research by senior experienced suicide researchers, $125,000

• **Standard Research Grants** – funds up to 2 years of research by proven researchers, $100,000

• **Linked Standard Research Grants** – funds up to 2 years of research collaboration for three or more sites to investigators at any level. $300,000
AFSP Research Grant
Categories

• **Young Investigator Grants** – funds up to 2 year of research by new investigators who are guided in their research by proven research mentors; additional money is provided for the mentor $85,000 with $10,000 allocated to mentor

• **Postdoctoral Research Fellowships** – funds up to 2 years of research training and guided research for new MDs and PhDs $104,000

• **Pilot Grants** – provide funding to pilot, small 1 or 2-year studies in new areas of research; open to all researchers $30,000
Grant Submission and Review Process

Most scientists regarded the new streamlined peer-review process as ‘quite an improvement.’
Review Process

• Application submitted November 16, 2015

• Staff review for appropriateness for AFSP

• Assigned to two outside expert reviewers

• Better-scoring applications assigned to one member of the RGC for presentation, discussion, review and scoring at the RGC meeting

• Scoring results and Recommendations are presented by AFSP staff to Scientific Board and Board of Directors for Approval in May 2016

• Critical feedback provided to all applicants and meritorious applications are funded (based on the availability of funds)
## Timetable

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<tr>
<th>REVIEW CYCLE</th>
<th>DUE DATE</th>
<th>REVIEW DATES</th>
<th>FUNDING DECISIONS</th>
<th>EARLIEST START DATE</th>
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Ideal Study

- Innovative
- Includes suicide outcome measure
- Ultimately has potential impact on suicide
- Sound methodology
- Investigator(s) with relevant expertise
- Evidence of feasibility
- Investigator(s) with ongoing interest in suicide research
- Adheres to Grant Procedure Manual
AFSP’s current research investment

- In 2014 initiated funding of 31 new scientific studies
- $6 million in current research
- Established our first RFA, up to $1.5 million over 3 years, to identify short-term risk / new interventions in clinical settings
THANK YOU AFSP CHAPTERS!

• The AFSP Research Program is supported by the continuing fundraising efforts of AFSP Chapters and Walks.
AFSP Goals

• Build a comprehensive research community

• Develop evidence based prevention programs

• Advocate for suicide prevention policies

• Raise awareness about suicide prevention

• A world without suicide
Our researchers