



# Problem Gambling and Suicide: The Possibilities for a National Suicide Prevention Strategy

April 20, 2005

**The Canadian Association for  
Suicide Prevention Blueprint for  
a National Suicide Prevention  
Strategy**

[www.suicideprevention.ca](http://www.suicideprevention.ca)

# Can we prevent suicide?

- First national strategy initiated in Finland in 1986.
- National prevention efforts in:
  - Norway
  - Finland
  - Slovenia
  - Sweden
  - France
  - Australia
  - Ireland
  - New Zealand
  - United States
  - England
  - Scotland

# CASP Blueprint

- Awareness and Understanding
  - Goal 1- Promote awareness in every part of Canada that suicide is our problem and is preventable.
  - Goal 2 – Develop broad-based support for suicide prevention and intervention.

# CASP Blueprint

- Awareness and Understanding
  - Goal 3 – Develop and implement a strategy to reduce stigma, to be associated with all suicide prevention, intervention and bereavement activities.
  - Goal 4 - Increase media knowledge regarding suicide.

# CASP Blueprint

- Prevention and Intervention
  - Goal 1: Develop, implement and sustain community-based suicide prevention programs, respecting diversity and culture at local, regional, and provincial/territorial levels.
  - Goal 2: Reduce the availability and lethality of suicide methods.

# CASP Blueprint

- Prevention and Intervention
  - Goal 3: Increase training for recognition of risk factors, warning signs and at-risk behaviours and for provision of effective intervention, targeting key gatekeepers, volunteers and professionals.
  - Goal 4: Develop and promote effective clinical and professional practice (effective strategies, standards of care) to support clients, families and communities.

# CASP Blueprint

- Prevention and Intervention
  - Goal 5: Improve access and integration with strong linkages between the continuum-of-care components/services/families.
  - Goal 6: Prioritize intervention and service delivery for high-risk groups while respecting local, regional, provincial/territorial uniqueness.



# CASP Blueprint

- Prevention and Intervention
  - Goal 7: Increase crisis intervention and support.
  - Goal 8: Increase services and support to those bereaved by suicide.
  - Goal 9: Increase the number of primary prevention activities.

# CASP Blueprint

- Knowledge Development and Transfer
  - Goal 1: Improve and expand surveillance systems.
  - Goal 2: Promote & support the development of effective evaluation tools.

# CASP Blueprint

- Knowledge Development and Transfer
  - Goal 3: Promote and develop suicide-related research.
  - Goal 4: Increase opportunities for reporting.

# CASP Blueprint

- Funding and Support
  - Goal 1: Increase funding and support for all activities connected with the CASP Blueprint for a Canadian National Suicide Prevention Strategy.
  - Goal 2: Ensure access to appropriate and adequate health, wellness and recovery services for all Canadians in keeping with the *Canada Health Act*.

# Targets for Prevention Strategies

<b>Intervention</b>	<b>Approach</b>	<b>Target</b>
Universal prevention strategy	Population	Entire populations – reduce alcohol and substance use
Selective prevention strategies	High risk	Individuals with higher than average risk
Indicated prevention strategies	High risk	Individuals with detectable symptoms

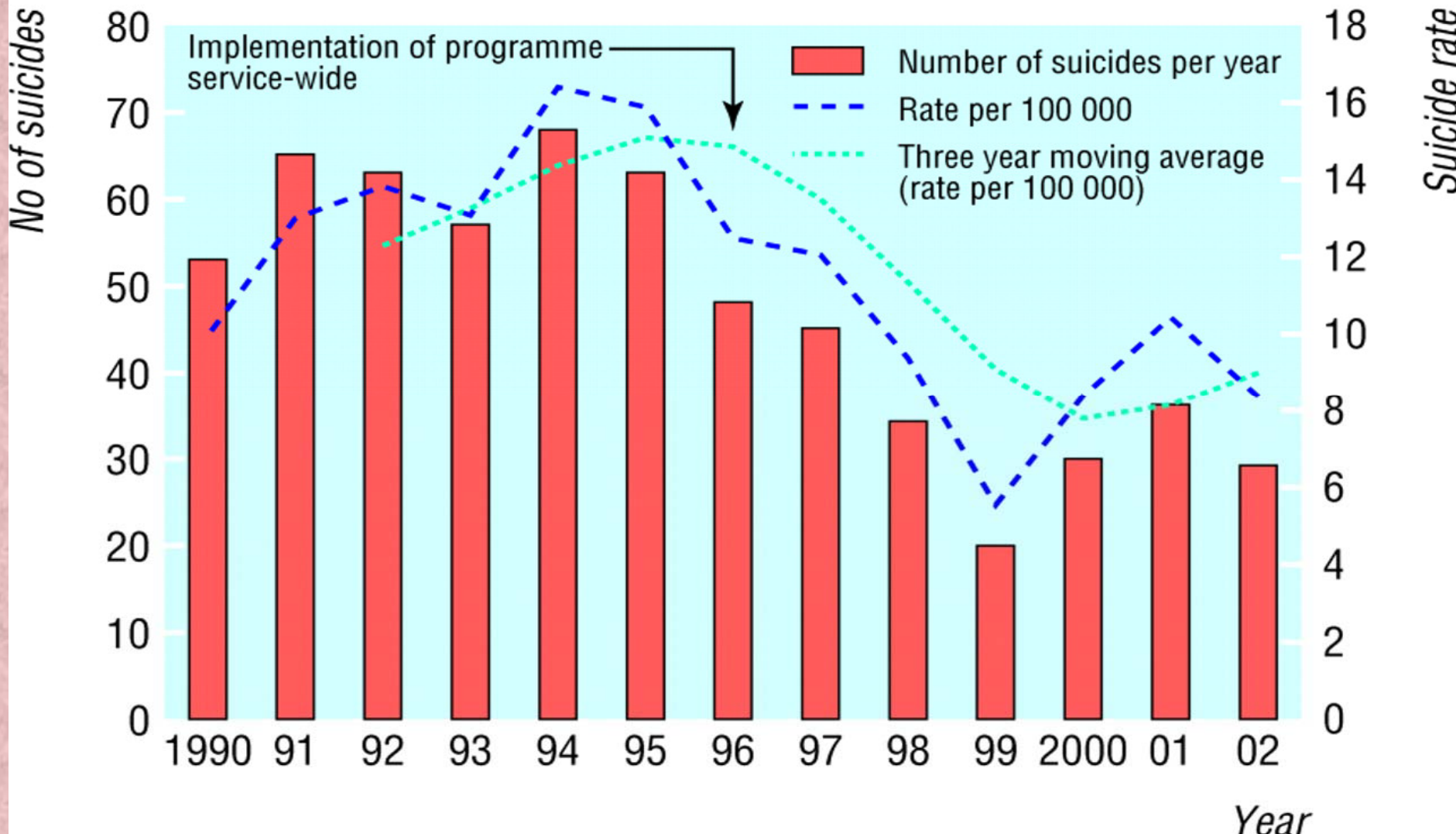
# Potential Initiatives Using Selective Prevention Strategies

- Gate keeper education targeting more severe gambling problems
- Programs for treating co-existing disorders – substance abuse, psychiatric disorders and gambling
- Removing barriers and stigma – improve treatment access and compliance

# A Suicide Prevention Program in the US Air Force

- Selective or high risk prevention strategy
- Ongoing commitment from leadership
- Consistent and regular communication on suicide prevention
- Destigmatize seeking help
- Improve collaboration among community prevention agencies
- Identification and training of gatekeepers

# Number of suicides, suicide rates US Air Force 1990-2002





# Comparison of effects before (1990-6) to after (1997-2002)

- Suicide – 33% risk reduction
- Homicide – 51% risk reduction
- Accidental death – 18% risk reduction
- Severe family violence – 54% risk reduction
- Moderate family violence – 30% risk reduction
- Mild family violence – 18% excess risk

# Suicide Prevention

- “Only recently have the knowledge and tools become available to approach suicide as a preventable problem with realistic opportunities to save many lives”
  - National Strategy for Suicide Prevention
    - U.S. Department of Health and Human Services 2001

# References

- Knox KL et al. Risk of suicide and related adverse outcomes after exposure to a suicide prevention programme in the US Air Force: cohort study. *BMJ* 327:Dec. 2003
- Knox KL et al. If suicide is a public health problem, what are we doing to prevent it? *Am J Public Health* 94:37, 2004.