Zero Suicide Training: Applicant Teleconference

January 30, 2019

One potential applicant noted that they will want the involvement of clinical staff in development of their suicide prevention policies and practices. Because these individuals have full caseloads and their time is valuable, they were wondering how much of their time would be needed.

Response:

It is true that the involvement of these clinical staff is important. But because each organization implements Zero Suicide in a unique manner it is not possible to provide a specific estimate of this time. One consideration is whether some of the work can be done through existing organizational structures in which these individuals already participate, such as a Quality Improvement Committee. This would not increase their requirement for non-direct service time but would realign their existing work.

There is another way to think about this. There are many factors that influence how organizations implement this systems change. The availability of critical employees is one of these. If the organizations decides it can only make these employees available for a certain number of hours then the implementation team would take this into consideration in determining what it will implement and when. While there may be five things the organization would like to do, it may only be able to start with two of them. This is okay.

There are a couple of ways to target efficient use of these staff resources. One would be to look at other efforts already underway and piggy back on these. For instance, workforce training is a key element of Zero Suicide. If the organization currently has a committee looking at revamping employee education then maybe they can incorporate this element of Zero Suicide in that committee's work. Another avenue would be to consider the results of the organizational self-study (complemented by the experience the organization has reviewing this at the training). The self-study and training may identify key areas of need. These can become the starting point for the work. Finding places where the organization can achieve "quick wins" to build support and confidence in the effort is also an important implementation consideration.

Zero Suicide is best viewed as a long-term system change and quality improvement process. Organizations will not complete this in one year nor should they expect to do so. Part of the goal of the training is to help organizations think about where to begin and what might be reasonable goals for the first year. The availability of organizational resources of all types needs to be part of what the team considers in developing these goals.