



Suicide Prevention in Nursing Model Designated as American Academy of Nursing Edge Runner

Innovative Program Focused on Critical Mental Health Intervention & Service

Washington, D.C. (December 16, 2021) – The American Academy of Nursing (Academy) recognizes the ***Suicide Prevention in Nursing: Breaking the Silence*** model as an Academy Edge Runner. The *Suicide Prevention in Nursing* model was developed by an interprofessional team inspired by the first national [longitudinal study](#) of U.S nurse suicide led by **Judy E. Davidson, DNP, RN, MCCM, FAAN**, Nurse Scientist at the University of California, San Diego Health Sciences (UC San Diego Health). Edge Runners are nurse-designed, innovative models of care or interventions with significant, demonstrated outcomes to improve health, impact cost, and influence policy.

As nurses continue to serve on the frontlines of the coronavirus pandemic, the aim of preventing nurse suicide is vital to the health and future of the profession. The *Suicide Prevention in Nursing* model is an evidence-based suicide prevention program for nurses, backed upon investigator-initiated research to quantify incidence and characteristics of nurse suicide in the United States. By increasing education and outreach to dispel the stigma around mental health, the *Suicide Prevention in Nursing* program advocates for better resources to support the mental health of nurses and ultimately save lives.

Dr. Davidson collaborated with her colleagues at UC San Diego Health; William Norcross, MD, Sidney Zisook, MD, Brittany Kirby, MSW, Gianna DeMichele, LMFT, Rachael Accardi, LCSW, Courtney Sanchez, LCSW, and Julie Kawasaki, LCSW to develop the *Suicide Prevention in Nursing* program. This is the first program of its kind; prior to the *Suicide Prevention in Nursing* program, the profession did not have proactive screening. The team was aware that a suicide prevention program, the *Healer Education Assessment and Referral (HEAR)*, was launched at UC San Diego School of Medicine in 2009 for physicians and medical students, but no program existed specifically for nurses. In addition to filling this interprofessional gap, the *Suicide Prevention in Nursing* model utilizes an [Interactive Screening Program \(ISP\)](#). The ISP offers nurses a safe and confidential way to conduct a brief screening and connect with mental health services to receive support and access to treatment options – anonymously. The ISP is a licensed program of the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention.

“Proactive and personalized support for nurses protects our colleagues and gives them the tools to continue providing excellent care to others,” said Dr. Davidson. “Our interprofessional model of care provides support to nurses while protecting their identity through the option of anonymous screening, treatment, and referral. One-on-one therapy, often through encryption, is coupled with group emotional process debriefings after crisis incidents to further encourage healing, self-care, and eliminating stigma surrounding mental health.”

In 2016, during the first year of the program’s launch, 40 nurses received counseling and 17 were successfully referred for continued treatment. Over a five-year period, between 2016 and 2020, *Suicide Prevention in Nursing*, has identified and transferred close to 300 nurses into treatment. In addition, over 1,000 nurses have benefited from group emotional process debriefings after critical events during its operation. These debriefings are interdisciplinary and all who have cared for a patient or were affected by an event are welcome. This support is integral to a team-based approach to healing and strengthens the caring community. Even though nurses have insurance coverage for mental health treatment, these nurses stated they would not have sought help without the program. The program has been replicated by at least six other organizations and is a cost-effective strategy to overcome the stigma of seeking help for mental health issues.

“The *Suicide Prevention in Nursing* program is paramount to fortify the mental health of the nursing profession, at any stage in their career, without stigma given the emotional and moral distress nurses experience in their efforts to provide care – particularly during the past two years of the COVID-19 pandemic,” said Academy President Kenneth R. White, PhD, AGACNP, ACHPN, FACHE, FAAN.

“Through educational outreach, we have the potential to shift the culture to caring for ourselves, in addition to our patients, and decrease stigma around seeking treatment for mental health disorders,” said Dr. Davidson. “We can make an incredible impact on the mental health of our colleagues.”

[Learn more about the *Suicide Prevention in Nursing* model.](#) All Academy Edge Runner profiles are available to view [here](#). For more details about the Edge Runner program, eligibility requirements, and to access the application please visit the Academy’s [website](#). Applications are now being accepted through January 31, 2022.

The [National Suicide Prevention Lifeline](#) is [1-800-273-8255](tel:1-800-273-8255). Other international suicide helplines can be found at befrienders.org.

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