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GOOD NEWS

Suicide Awareness Training Saves a Life

Names have been changed for privacy.

Recently, CPWR learned of another real-life example that shows the importance of training workers in suicide prevention. Joe, a member of a building trades local and in his first year as an instructor at his training center, used skills from a suicide prevention course to help save a life.

Joe has long been involved in recovery and suicide prevention efforts at his local, and that experience helped him recognize warning signs in one of his apprentices and act quickly.

A few weeks into training a new group, Joe was taking attendance when two apprentices nearly got into a fight -- one was yelling and swearing at the other. Joe calmed them down and kept the class on track.

Later that day, Joe noticed Alex, the apprentice who had been swearing, leave the building with his tools, get into his car, and drive off quickly. Concerned, Joe checked with his colleague Mike, who had Alex in another class earlier. Mike said nothing unusual had happened that day.

"This was a red flag for me," Joe remembered. "It didn't add up."

Joe started asking questions: "What is he usually like in class? Has he been acting differently? Is it normal for him to have a short temper?"

Mike explained that Alex was usually on time, well-prepared, engaged, and

pleasant, a stark contrast from what they witnessed that day. In fact, Mike had recently started noticing other changes in Alex's behavior.

Joe and Mike decided to involve the apprenticeship coordinator. After discussing their concerns, the three contacted a family member, who confirmed they had also noticed troubling changes, including statements from Alex suggesting he might be considering suicide, such as "things didn't matter anymore."

The family member then reached out to Alex, who admitted he was having suicidal thoughts and agreed to seek help. He entered inpatient treatment and, after completing it, returned to his apprentice program.

Joe credits his QPR Institute suicide prevention training, which teaches people to intervene with those having suicidal thoughts, for helping him recognize the warning signs. "Without that training, I might have just thought I had another strong personality—someone who was going to be an issue in class. Instead, I realized the anger was a warning sign. The training allowed me to recognize the real problem and do something about it."

If your site or training center needs suicide awareness resources:

- Visit the [CPWR website](#) for the [CPWR Building Resilience Program](#), which has two discussion-based suicide awareness modules for classroom or online delivery.
- Our industry partner CIASP offers the [LivingWorks Suicide Prevention Training](#) free for up to five people per organization.
- CPWR also provides free [suicide awareness toolbox talks and hazard alerts](#) that cover warning signs and how to start a conversation.

Learn more about free materials from CPWR in the resources section below.

ANNOUNCEMENT

New Peer Support Collaboration Opportunity

CPWR is launching a monthly meeting series focused on sharing good practices for creating and sustaining peer support programs in the building trades unions. When we say peer support, we mean members of building trades unions who assist members struggling with mental health or substance use challenges. Some unions have full-time paid staff who do this, while other unions have trained members who work with the tools and have volunteered to fill this role and sometimes get special training.

Union members who are acting as full-time peers, part-time peers, or volunteers are encouraged to attend. Each session will feature:

- A short presentation from an industry expert.
- Time for questions, discussion, and collaboration.

Please note that representatives from treatment centers wanting to sell their services are not welcome. Our goal is to help share information among seasoned and novice peer support people in the trades, talk about what does and does not work, and inspire others to build systems that address mental health, suicide prevention, and substance use challenges.

We want your input!

- How can we make sure information about these meetings reach the right people and provide the greatest benefit?
- What schedule works best?

To join the mailing list and help for the first meeting please [fill out this form](#).

FREE RESOURCES FROM CPWR

Suicide Awareness Infographics and Hazard Alert

CPWR's collection of suicide prevention resources includes **two infographics** created in partnership with the [Construction Industry Alliance for Suicide Prevention](#) (CIASP). The **first** ([English](#); [Spanish](#)) is primarily for suicide awareness -- it points out that construction has one of the highest suicide rates of any industry, that together we can prevent it, and that people should start the conversation about suicide prevention. The **second** ([English](#); [Spanish](#)) introduces the Reach Out, Respond, Connect framework for helping a struggling worker access services. Both infographics can be posted on their own or used in conjunction with the CPWR Suicide Prevention Hazard Alert ([English](#); [Spanish](#)).

RESEARCH CORNER

Australian Research Leads the Way

Research summarized in a [recent CPWR webinar](#) ([also available in Spanish](#)) showed that the suicide rate for male construction workers in Australia has been decreasing at twice the rate of the overall male working population, and these declines have been happening while the overall male suicide rate is still increasing. Multiple explanations for this discrepancy were offered: employed males benefit from mental health and suicide prevention services; Australia has population-wide mental health literacy and stigma reduction efforts that include male-tailored elements; and the country has construction-sector specific suicide prevention, including policy from a 2003 Royal Commission, the MATES in Construction program, and other state-based programs.

MATES in Construction, created in 2007, conducts foundational research, evaluation research, and frontier research (which helps with development of future program changes and objectives) on suicide prevention. MATES provides general suicide awareness training, connector training (where trainees learn how to connect a colleague to a needed resource), and applied suicide prevention skills training; it also has a 24/7 helpline, case management, field officers, and volunteer connectors. It has reached 427,000 workers and has accredited over 400 construction sites to run its program. MATES has [compiled its research activities](#).

[Bluehats Suicide Prevention Program](#) is another state-based Australian construction suicide awareness initiative, created in 2018 as part of a benefits program. Bluehats provides onsite General Awareness (GA) training to improve suicide awareness, recognize poor mental health in others, and provide tools and information about how to seek help. Those who have completed the GA training are asked if they would like to become Bluehats; if so, they receive further training and provide onsite peer support and referral to clinical services.

A recent [study of Bluehats](#) found that expanding the program to reach small businesses, rural areas, diverse cultural groups, as well as broadening its scope to include early intervention, would increase its impact. Furthermore, the article pointed out that longer-term outcomes about the program's impacts are unclear. This points to the need for more well-designed evaluations to measure outcomes. MATES' efforts to conduct such research were thwarted by the pandemic, which narrowed the scope of one of their evaluation studies at the time. Current research is being conducted to address this knowledge gap.

The North American construction industry has been inspired by the work done in Australia. CPWR is supporting efforts to create peer support programs that address suicide awareness and prevention. A new study that will address these issues is in its design phase. CPWR will be announcing this work soon, so please stay tuned for more.

FOCUS ON PREVENTION

Suicide Safe Messaging Guide

Talking about suicide and mental health can be challenging. To respond, CPWR and [The Construction Industry Alliance for Suicide Prevention](#) (CIASP) developed the [Talking about Suicide in the Construction Industry Safe Messaging Guide](#) to foster safe and supportive conversations around suicide prevention. The guide was designed to empower anyone to talk about suicide, avoid stigmatizing language, and present a full and accurate picture of suicide in the construction industry and its contributing factors. The guide has sections geared for the media, trainers, presenters, peer supporters, and is useful for anyone interested in talking to others about suicide or mental health. CPWR hosted a webinar to introduce this new resource, which is available free and on-demand in [English](#) or [Spanish](#).

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Contribute your organization's good news, human-interest story, free resources, or research findings to a future issue of REASON. Learn how by contacting Christopher Rodman at CPWR: crodman@cpwr.com.

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