

Best Practices with Vocational Rehabilitation to Increase Protective Factors for Individuals with Disabilities Experiencing Suicidal Ideation



Tips & Resources

Individuals with disabilities experience higher rates of suicide or suicidal ideation (SI) and that can be exacerbated by insufficient support available in relation to a variety of gaps in services. This project focused on the area of disability employment supports and the intersectionality of suicide-related training of front-line service providers of vocational rehabilitation.

Project Goals

- Understand the levels of training and confidence of front-line service providers.
- Develop targeted education resources and tools.
- Incorporating MI-SI to help front line service providers better support Individuals with disabilities experiencing suicidal thoughts and behaviors (STBs).

Why this topic?

Suicide is a well-known problem among many populations and rates continue to increase in the US and abroad (Hyer & Dixon, 2022). Individuals with disabilities experience higher rates of suicide (Lund et al., 2020). Research studies suggest that unemployment, physical illness, and mental disorders are also associated with higher risks of suicide (Van Orden et al., 2010).

What is MI-SI?

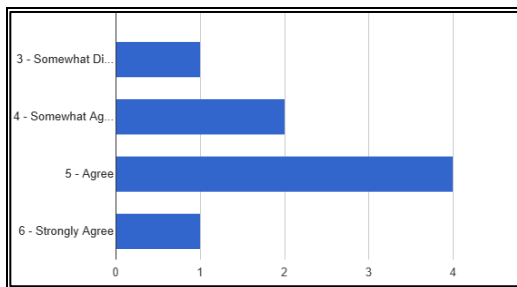
Motivational Interviewing – Suicidal Ideation was adapted from MI to reduce suicide risk and support motivation to live in populations experiencing SI/SSTBs. The premise of MI-SI has been compared to how traditional MI can be used to increase motivation to change in relation to increasing motivation to live in populations experience SI/STBs (Britton et al., 2020). The goal of MI-SI is to allow space for individuals to explore their reasons for living and dying in accordance with how MI frames strengthening motivation to change and resolving ambivalence.

Research Responses

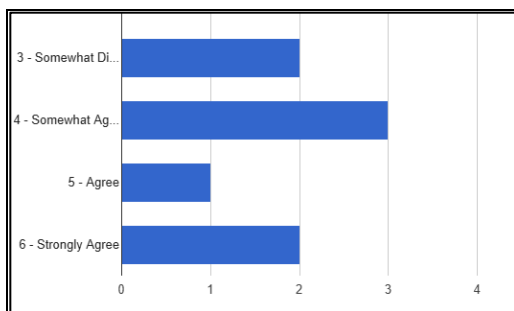
This study gathered feedback from Colorado Division of Vocational Rehabilitation staff with a current caseload of Individuals with disabilities seeking services. Most caseloads were between 103-146 with one respondent having caseload of 20. The survey collected data around the current levels of training and confidence of service providers that support Individuals with disabilities who are experiencing STBs. Eight individuals responded to the survey and even though it is a small number there were key takeaways and considerations. They reported that they all work with individuals experiencing SI or STBs, but the frequency ranged from

monthly to quarterly to annually. All the respondents felt that additional training would increase their confidence by working with individuals experiencing STBs and either agreed or strongly agreed that they could consult their supervisors regarding this topic. Confidence levels were mixed regarding screening, what to say or do when working with STBs, and training preparation as highlighted in the following responses:

I know what to say or do when working with clients at risk of suicide or experiencing depression.



My current level of education and/or training has prepared me to conduct suicide risk assessments.



Clinical and Nonclinical Suicide Prevention Training from CDPHE



These lists and resources are not fully exhaustive but there are a range of options.

Protective Factors

- Social connectedness (Van Orden et al., 2010).
- Community engagement (Lundahl et al., 2024).
- Positive coping strategies (Micol et al., 2022).

Risk Factors

- Previous attempt(s)
- Chronic illness and/or disability
- ACES and/or exposure to violence (Van Orden et al., 2010).

Crisis Resources

- 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline
- Veterans Crisis Line - Dial 988 then Press 1.
- The Trevor Project:
<http://www.thetrevorproject.org>
- Trans Lifeline:
<http://www.translifeline.org>

Training, Screening, & Intervention

- QPR <http://www.qprinstitute.com>
- VitalCog Suicide Prevention
<http://www.vitalcog.com>
- Ask Suicide-Screening Questions (ASQ) Toolkit 
- Columbia-Suicide Severity Rating Scale (C-SSRS)
<http://www.cssrs.columbia.edu>
- Mental Health First Aid
<http://www.mentalhealthfirstaid.org>

Postventions

- <http://www.postvention.org>
- <http://www.allianceofhope.org>
- Suicide Awareness Voices of Education: <http://www.save.org>

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