

**PRESS RELEASE  
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**Suicide Prevention Efforts Strengthened  
With Additional Certified Trainers on Guam**

**Hagåtña, Guam; September 12, 2011** – Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse – Prevention and Training Branch partnered with the Guam National Guard and *LivingWorks*, Education Inc., a Canada-based organization for the conduct of a three-day Applied Suicide Intervention Skills (ASIST) Training of Trainers. With the current rate of one suicide every two weeks on Guam, the need to increase the number of certified suicide prevention trainers was evident.

In Mary Elizabeth Dallas' article for Medline Plus ([Click Here for the Full Story](#)), a national study by Seattle Children's Research Instituteshows that more than 70% suicidal teens don't obtain mental health services they need:

***Although the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports that suicide is the third leading cause of death for people aged 15 to 24 years, a new study shows few suicidal teens are getting the mental health treatment they need.***

***The researchers found only 13 percent of teenagers with suicidal thoughts visited a mental health professional through their health care network, and only 16 percent received treatment during the year, even though they were eligible for mental health visits without a referral and with relatively low co-payments.***(Dallas 2011)

The status of suicide on Guam is parallel to its severity in the national level. Suicide is in fact the 5<sup>th</sup> leading cause of death on the island with a total of 22 deaths since January 2011; 6of which occurred in August this year alone. Guam's community is coming together to minimize risks for suicide and to promote an environment that helps people to feel safe and supported.

From September 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup>, *LivingWorks, Education, Inc.* consultant Dave Biblowsuccessfully trained 26 individuals in the two-day Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST) training, followed with a three-day Training of Trainers with six (6) select ASIST provisional trainer candidates. All participants learned about the application of suicide "first aid"to persons showing symptoms of suicide risks. The six newly trained ASIST provisional trainers joina network of about 5,000 active trainers around the world.

ASIST is a two-day workshop locally coordinated by the Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse – Prevention and Training Branch staff along with other certified Trainers on Guam.Participants learn how to be more ready, willing and ableto help prevent the immediate risk of suicide through successful interventions modeled by evidence-based practices.

Since the first training offered in 2009, a total of 41 ASIST trainings have been completed, preparing over 700 local residents on Guam from various backgrounds, representative of diverse fields, to be skilled suicide caregivers. Guam alsohas a total of 17active ASIST trainers who continue the local effort of providing suicide intervention skills training to the community.

For more information on ASIST workshop locations and venue or other suicide prevention trainings and programs, visit [www.peaceguam.org](http://www.peaceguam.org) or contact the DMHSA Prevention and Training Branch (PEACE office) at 671-477-9079 thru 9083.



*Six provisional trainer candidates completed the ASIST Training for Trainers on September 16, 2011.*

*Pictured from L-R front row are: Lester Whitley (Guam Memorial Hospital); Dave Biblow (ASIST Team Leader), Jacob Perez (Department of Education) and Pedro Larribas (Guam National Guard)*

*And L-R back row are: Phyllis Leon Guerrero (Guam National Guard/Department of Education), Audrey Topasna (Department of Mental Health & Substance Abuse), Barbara Mafnas (Guam Community College/SaguaManagu), Debbie Duenas (ASIST Consulting Trainer) and Michelle Sasamoto (ASIST Consulting Trainer)*



*Twenty-five individuals completed the ASIST Training on September 13, 2011, reaching the 700-mark of ASIST-certified individuals on Guam. Pictured L-R front row: Donna Kuhn (Department of Mental Health & Substance Abuse), Annie Unpingco (Department of Mental Health & Substance Abuse), Catherine Palomo (Department of Education), Esther Arca (Direct Support Provider) and Cindy Cabrera (FHP).*

*Pictured L-R middle row: Michelle Sasamoto (ASIST Consulting Trainer), Joseph Foster (Department of Mental Health & Substance Abuse), Barbara Mafnas (GCC/SaguaManagu), David Santos (Direct Support Provider), Audrey Topasna (Department*

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of Mental Health & Substance Abuse), Lester Whitley (Guam Memorial Hospital), Amanda Reyes (Island Girl Power), Michelle Taitague (Department of Education) KonstatineRudenko (U.S. Navy), Toni Jackson (Direct Support Provider), Dave Biblow (ASIST Team Leader) and Sara Dimla (Department of Mental Health &Substtance Abuse).

Pictured L-R back row: Pedro Larribas (Guam National Guard), Matthew Drayton (U.S. Navy), Roman Kono (Westcare), Michael Edgerle (Direct Support Provider), Kenneth Coomer (Direct Support Provider), Jacob Perez (Department of Education), Kristen Kinsley (U.S. Navy) and Elton Iginoef (Island Girl Power)

Not pictured: Phyliss Leon Guerrero (Guam National Guard) and Debbie Duenas (ASIST Consulting Trainer)

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