

Older Adults

Epidemiological Catchment Area (ECA) studies showed that the groups least likely to receive social support, care and treatment if needed are older adults (or the elderly.)

While most faith communities have older adult ministries, many older adult members can still remain isolated, especially due to cognitive and/or physical health decline, overextended caregivers, or access barriers like not being able to get transportation and care giver assistance to and from church. The Sacramento County 2012 community needs assessment conducted by G.O.A.L.S. for Women verified the importance of social support as a protective factor for older adults.



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"I am always going to check on my friend so he is not alone." (70 year old African American male).

Reaching out to older adults is another opportunity to mobilize Angels in the Sanctuary to help others in need and reduce risks for suicide.

In Solidarity

*"There's more than one way of being Black....."
Dr. Gloria Morrow*

In African American communities (including faith congregations) there is tremendous diversity among the people. There are different socioeconomic levels, religious beliefs, educational statuses, sexual orientations, physical and mental disabilities (or "different abilities"), racial identities (biracial/multi-racial), ethnic heritages, skin colors, heights, weights (body masses), eye colors, hair textures, family structures, immigration statuses, etc. Fortunately, there is also a diversity of natural helpers within these communities and congregations who have unique strengths and compassion for others. We can all work together "inclusively" and collaboratively so everyone gets the support they need to reduce risks for African American suicide.

How We Can Help

Our Supporting Community Connections: African American Community program offers several culturally appropriate resources and supportive services to diverse Sacramento County African American faith communities & men and women across the lifespan. Services include:

Faith Community Round Tables

These gatherings support faith communities in reducing risk factors for suicide and increasing protective factors by opening up dialogue and breaking the silence about African American suicide. One-on-one consultation is also available to Pastors and other leaders on: mental health concerns, strengthening existing ministries to enhance support to members with mental health challenges, etc.



Kitchen Table Talks (KTTs)

Sharing healthy food in safe & respectful spaces can enable cultural resilience to be validated, historical strengths & valued traditions to be honored and circulated. Kitchen Table Talks (KTTs) are peer led small groups for 4-6 people who usually meet once or more often to talk about mental health and African American suicide prevention in "culturally appropriate ways" that highlight the importance of breaking the silence to reduce risks and increase protective factors (e.g. social support). Groups can be tailored to men, single mothers, youth, LGBTQ adults, LGBTQ youth, older adults and faith communities. In fact, 42.2% of respondents from our 2012 community needs assessment said they would prefer to try a Kitchen Table Talk.

Just Like Sunday Dinners (JLSD)

In response to a call from our youth/TAY asking for more inter-generational sharing opportunities, and places to learn about and experience African American dignity and humanity, "Just Like Sunday Dinners" (JLSDs)

are groups for 7-14 people and usually meet 3-4 times. These are more intimate gatherings of family or extended family networks. When surveyed, 76% of youth respondents to our 2012 community needs assessment said they sing, rap or put feelings into spoken word as a coping strategy



and skill. JLSDs are also places for validating and showcasing the talents, strengths and coping skills of African American youth/TAY.

Behavioral Health Information in Electronic (Web/Social Media) and Print Media

Please visit our website www.sacsccefam.org and Facebook page to learn more about African American suicide & cultural expressions of risks and protective factors.

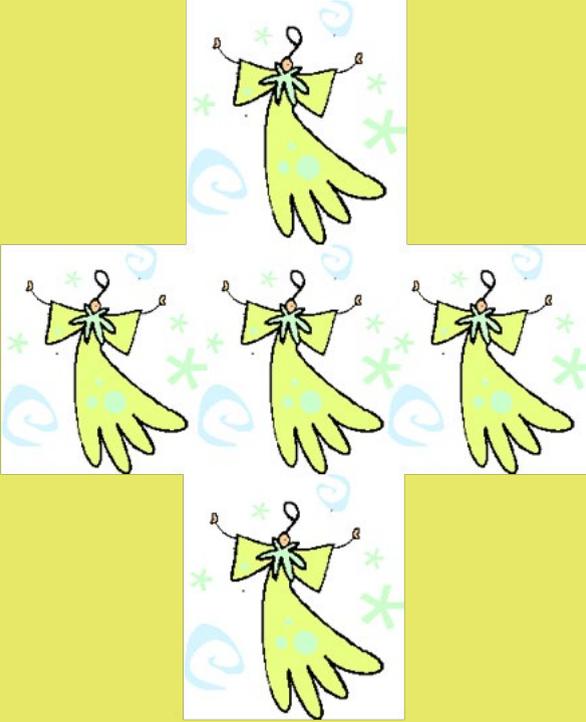
You can also contact us for other mental health resources and materials.

G.O.A.L.S For Women, Inc.
916-285-1839

If you or someone you know is in crisis...call 24-hour 1-800-273-TALK (1-800-273-8255).

Sacramento County Division of Behavioral Health Services has awarded a contract to G.O.A.L.S. For Women, Inc. to operate the Supporting Community Connections (SCC) program for the African American Community. SCC is a Suicide Prevention project that is funded by voter approved Proposition 63, the Mental Health Services Act (MHSA).

Angels in the Sanctuary



Tapping The Power of Natural Helpers in African American Faith Communities

To Help Reduce Risk & Protect Against Suicide

A Resource for Sacramento County African American Faith Communities

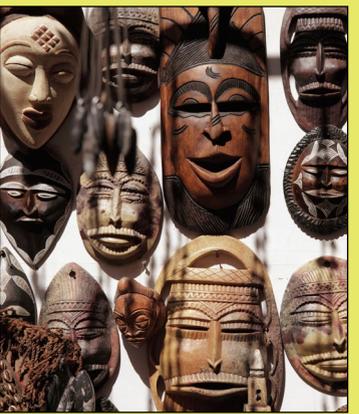
Culturally Appropriate Mental Health Communication & Promotion – An African American Suicide Prevention Call to Action

Mental health communication and health promotion are important for helping all people increase their awareness of mental health risks and to understand what kinds of preventive actions they can take to reduce or eliminate risks.



Mental health communication and promotion can also help change attitudes and connect people to caring and informed others able to offer support and linkage to needed resources. Culturally appropriate support for those struggling with stigma, physical or emotional pain, and/or feelings of hopelessness is critically important for helping all people experience relief from suffering, isolation and avoidance of crises and greater life and health satisfaction.

One African American dies by suicide every 4.5 hours in the U.S. (Crosby & Molock 2006). Suicide was the 16th leading cause of death overall in 2003 for African Americans. However, overall statistics are often underreported because death classification policies (& relying only on proxy reports from grieving survivors suffering from pain, isolation, confusion, and/or in some cases stigma) in lieu of post-mortem psychological investigations. Underreporting covers up the disproportionate impact of this health problem on African American males and females in the adolescent and young-adult age groups (Reese, Crosby, Hasbrouck, & Willis, 2004).



Risks & Protective Factors

Suicidal gestures (e.g. thoughts, attempts or completions) or "suicidality" is culturally taboo in African American communities. African American community members just don't talk about it unless it happens to someone famous or well known in society. In a 2012 community needs assessment conducted by G.O.A.L.S For Women, African Americans in Sacramento County reported the following concerns that are considered risk factors: 47% of respondents reported deep emotional pain or difficulty over the death of a loved one, 45.1% felt deep emotional pain or difficulty from losing a job, not having money, or not having a well-paying job, and 30.7% felt living in a poor/disadvantaged neighborhood caused them to experience deep emotional pain or difficulty.



Because suicide is a taboo topic it is considered to be a "silent killer" in African American communities. This is why it's vitally important to mobilize caring and supportive natural helpers within churches / faith communities to reach out, and help break the silence and remove the stigma of seeking help. Natural helping can reduce risks and save lives.

A very gracious First Lady of a Missionary Baptist Church expressed the spiritual importance of natural helpers in congregations this way:

"When God puts love and concern on your heart for someone you can't help but obey.... That may look like checking on them from time to time, or asking how they're doing.... A smile and curious heart about their well-being lets them know they're not alone and someone is thinking about and praying for them. Something you're spiritually led to do. You don't question or ask why. You just obey."

Well said. Natural helpers respond to an inner humanity that is compassionate, caring and seeks to be there for others.

African American Women, Young Adolescents/teens & Girls

Many African American women, adolescents/teens and girls experience the same life stressors other females face but through uniquely different lenses. For example, research shows that African American women, particularly disadvantaged women, are more likely to experience anxiety and depressive disorders due to role strain, caring for others (often at the expense of first caring for themselves), chronic complex stress exposure, but fewer supportive resources to act as buffers (Gibbs & Furey 1994).

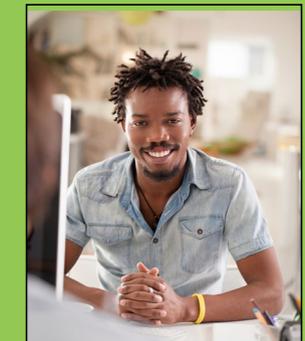


Most African American women, adolescents/teens & girls daily lives are complicated by the insidious stressor of racism (e.g. vulnerability to micro aggressions, etc.) (Boyd-Franklin 2003 p.88), They must learn to mobilize "cognitive armor" against it and to develop a healthy sense of self. They must also reconcile the notion of "the strong Black woman" ideal in relation to how they learn to view themselves (e.g. Is that an unrealistic myth/ burden that no one can bear or historical reality, and symbol of self-respect/gratitude and honor of ancestral Black women of the past and on whose shoulders they now stand?).

We know the issues Black women face are diverse and complex and can greatly increase risks for suicide. Researchers using data from the National Survey of American Life (NSAL) found that African American female teens are at higher risk for attempting suicide even if they have never been diagnosed with a mental disorder. These attempts may occur up to 10-40 times more often than completed suicides. Natural helpers in sanctuaries are greatly needed to support African American women, adolescents/teens and girls.

African American Men & Boys

African American men, TAY (transition age youth) and boys face incredible threats and risks for exposure to negative psychologically distressing social/environmental experiences, particularly Black men, TAY and boys of darker skin color. Black men and TAY are often feared and treated suspiciously within society, denied their humanity of loving their families, children and communities, and may be racially profiled more often than their White counterparts. These incidents of negative social rejection that includes less tolerance for any displays of mental distress can lead to higher rates of 5150s, clinical misdiagnoses, seclusions and gateways into restricted levels of inpatient care where they are more likely to experience restraints or eventual incarceration. In addition, racial profiling, DWB (driving while Black), police brutality, skin color discrimination, Black on Black crime and gang violence involvement are just some



of the risk factors that serve as threats to the likelihood of Black TAY and boys reaching adulthood. (Boyd-Franklin 2003). Nihilism or a sense of hopelessness can occur among Black men, TAY, and boys because they can feel a daily state of endangerment and negative stereotyping that denies their full humanity. "This can lead to frustration intolerance that exceeds normal coping capacities

and increases the risk for self-harming behaviors such as suicide by cop. Almost 11% of African American male students in grades 9-12 seriously considered suicide in 2003. (OMH <http://minorityhealth.hhs.gov/templates/browse.aspx>)"

We particularly need Angels in Sanctuaries to reach out and support African American men, boys and TAY.