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TERRY F. WHITE  
SECRETARY

*Communities for a Lifetime: Elder Ready, Child Friendly, Family Focused*

MEMORANDUM

To: All AAA Directors **Policy #: 082802-1-I-VCS**

From: Terry White, Secretary

Date: August 28, 2002

Subject: Notice of Instruction: Implementation of Elder Suicide Prevention Program

Last year, Governor Bush formed the Florida Task Force on Suicide Prevention to develop a suicide prevention strategy to provide programs and initiatives that will lead to progress in reducing Florida's suicide rate. Older adults have a suicide rate 50% higher than young people or the nation as a whole. The task force has established a goal of reducing elder suicide in Florida by one third over the next three years.

The Department of Elder Affairs recognizes this is a serious problem so we are joining the Governor and the task force in the effort to reduce these senseless deaths of older Floridians. The purpose of this notice is to elicit your support for this important initiative.

To demonstrate our commitment, the department will obtain the services of qualified trainers and program training materials to conduct training for DOEA and AAA staff to be trained in the Florida Suicide Prevention Gatekeeper Training Program. Suicide prevention activities will also be included among the Title IIID program priorities for the upcoming contract period beginning in January. We are providing this advance notice to allow you adequate time to plan and prepare for this new program.

The objective for the program is to establish a network of adults who can recognize, respond and appropriately refer suicidal individuals for help. This training is specifically intended to teach the recipient how to impart these skills and knowledge to others. The train-the-trainer workshop is not a comprehensive look at suicide, nor is the training intended to replace counseling or mental health services.

We plan to provide this training to appropriate DOEA headquarters staff and each AAA Community Outreach Wellness Coordinator. Our objective is to equip these trainers with the skills and confidence to train staff and volunteers that come into contact with our elders. Intended audiences would be people such as case managers, senior companions, respite volunteers, meals on wheels volunteers, other volunteers, and CARES staff.

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During September, we will be finalizing our contractual relationship with the persons conducting the training. Please share this information with your wellness coordinators for planning purposes. Ken McLeod of my staff will be contacting them within the next three weeks with details on the training site and dates, which should be in late October or in November. This will provide them with the tools and skills to implement the gatekeeper program during the new contract period starting in January.

Thank you very much for your assistance and support. If you have questions, please call Ken McLeod at (850) 414-2307.

TW/km

cc: Susan Tucker  
Tom Reimers  
Ron Taylor