



## For Immediate Release

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### **New Training Guide to Elevate Suicide Prevention Efforts within the National Law Enforcement Community** *National Partnership Launches Facilitation Guide*

**Washington, DC**, September 15, 2015. At its highest levels, the national law enforcement community acknowledges suicide prevention as a health and safety priority. In 2012 there were 126 documented suicides of police officers (versus 49 killed by gunfire in the line of duty). In 2013 the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) held a forum called “Breaking the Silence: A National Symposium on Law Enforcement Office Suicide and Mental Health,” and in 2014 the IACP helped develop a video in partnership with the Carson J Spencer Foundation, the National Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention, and the American Association of Suicidology entitled ***Breaking the Silence: Suicide Prevention in Law Enforcement*** (access video here: <https://youtu.be/fBJbo7mnnBs>). Today, as part of Suicide Prevention Month, as an expanded collaborative effort, the partnership is releasing a video facilitation training guide for law enforcement agencies. [View the Guide here.](#)

“As a law enforcement officer for 30 plus years, the last eight as chief, I recognize the value of sustained, comprehensive and coordinated suicide prevention efforts for in law enforcement agencies. These tools can provide departments with an important first step in opening discussions around the sensitive issue of suicide and mental health,” said Kenosha Police Chief John Morrissey, member of the National Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention’s Workplace Task Force.

“We must raise awareness that officer mental wellness is part of overall officer fitness. We need to let people know that mental health conditions are not uncommon among police officers and that we need to encourage people to reach out to peer and professional help when they are overwhelmed,” said Yost Zakhary, Immediate Past President, International Association of Chiefs of Police. In addition Chief Zakhary serves as an Action Alliance Executive Committee Member and the Public Sector Co-Lead of the Workplace Task Force.

#### Facts about police officer suicides and mental health

- Average age of officers dying by suicide is 42
- Average time on the job for officers dying by suicide is 16 years
- 15% – 18% (150,000) of officers suffer from Post-Traumatic Stress
- 91% of suicides were by male officers
- 63% of officers dying by suicide were single
- 11% of officers dying by suicide were military veterans
- Firearms were used in 91.5% of police suicides



- In 83% of the police officer suicides, personal problems appear prevalent prior to the suicide
- 11% of the police officers dying by suicide had legal problems pending

Recognizing the importance of suicide prevention, the facilitation guide and video emphasize that law enforcement organizations must specifically address the needs of their agencies when developing prevention strategies. The tools provide much-needed resources to law enforcement agencies designed to help integrate suicide prevention into overall law enforcement wellness. The facilitation guide and video help start the conversation on suicide prevention and officer wellness. The guide is broken into subsections so that the training can be offered to all those involved in law enforcement: command staff, supervisors, line staff and families.

“We must shift the culture in law enforcement,” said Sally Spencer-Thomas, CEO and Co-Founder of the Carson J Spencer Foundation and Private Sector Co-Lead of the Action Alliance’s Workplace Task Force. “Opening up a straightforward dialogue about suicide and sharing stories of hope and recovery let officers know they are not alone and that many resources exist.”

“Our public servants in law enforcement deserve our utmost care and consideration for their difficult and often dangerous jobs. Their mental health and overall well-being is a concern for all of us. This guide will help the law enforcement work environment become a safer place for those law enforcement officers who are struggling or in distress,” said Doryn Chervin, Dr.P.H. Executive Secretary, National Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention and Vice President and Senior Scientist at Education Development Center, Inc. Division of Health and Human Development.

“The American Association of Suicidology (AAS) recognizes the important role of workplace-based interventions in the broader suicide prevention mission. Law enforcement professionals are at elevated risk for suicide,” said Michelle Cornette Ph.D. Executive Director, American Association of Suicidology. “The Breaking the Silence video and facilitation guide mark an important step in raising awareness and facilitating help-seeking among law enforcement professionals. AAS is proud to be a partner in this important endeavor.”

Content development was supported by the Kenosha Police Department, Pennsylvania’s Adult/Older Adult Suicide Prevention Coalition, The Badge of Life, Municipal Police Institute and The Law Enforcement Survival Institute.

#### **Breaking the Silence: Suicide Prevention in Law Enforcement:**

- VIDEO: <https://youtu.be/fBJbo7mnnBs>
- [View the GUIDE.](#)

**The American Association of Suicidology (AAS;** [www.suicidology.org](http://www.suicidology.org)) is a membership organization founded in 1968 for all those involved in suicide prevention and intervention or touched by suicide. AAS leads the advancement of scientific and programmatic efforts in suicide prevention through



research, education and training, the development of standards and resources, and survivor support services.

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**The Carson J Spencer Foundation** ([www.CarsonJSpencer.org](http://www.CarsonJSpencer.org)) is a Colorado nonprofit, established in 2005. We envision a world where leaders and communities are committed to sustaining a passion for living. We elevate the conversation to make suicide prevention a health and safety priority. We sustain a passion for living by:

- Delivering innovative and effective suicide prevention programs for working-aged people.
  - [www.WorkingMinds.org](http://www.WorkingMinds.org)
  - [www.ManTherapy.org](http://www.ManTherapy.org)
- Coaching young leaders to develop social enterprises for mental health promotion and suicide prevention.
- Supporting people bereaved by suicide.

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#### **International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP)**

The IACP is the world's largest association of law enforcement executives. Founded in 1893, the IACP has over 21,000 members in 100 countries around the world. The IACP's mission is to advance professional police services; promote enhanced administrative, technical, and operational police practices; and foster cooperation and the exchange of information and experience among police leaders and police organizations of recognized professional and technical standing throughout the world. Additionally, the IACP champions the recruitment and training of qualified persons in the police profession and encourages all police personnel worldwide to achieve and maintain the highest standards of ethics, integrity, community interaction and professional conduct. For more information on the IACP, please visit <http://www.theiacp.org>

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**The National Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention** ([www.ActionAllianceforSuicidePrevention.org](http://www.ActionAllianceforSuicidePrevention.org)) is the public-private partnership working to advance the National Strategy for Suicide Prevention and make suicide prevention a national priority. Education Development Center, Inc. (EDC) operates the Secretariat for the Action Alliance, which was launched in 2010 by former U.S. Health and Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sebelius and former U.S. Defense Secretary Robert Gates with the goal of saving 20,000 lives in five years.

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