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## Historic Recommendations Give Voice to Suicide Attempt Survivors and Promote Lived Experience into Suicide Prevention Core Values

***The Way Forward* bridges gaps between suicide attempt survivors, clinicians, hospitals policy makers, and suicide prevention leaders**

Washington, DC – Suicide attempt survivors are emerging with a collective voice and cohesive framework for shaping the future of suicide prevention and today released the National Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention’s [\*The Way Forward: Pathways to hope, recovery, and wellness with insights from lived experience \(The Way Forward\)\*](#). For far too long, the suicide prevention field has not engaged the perspectives of those with live experience (those who have lived through suicide attempts and suicidal thoughts or feelings) and a culture of silence has prevailed. Authored by the Action Alliance’s Suicide Attempt Survivors Task Force (SASTF), *The Way Forward* sets the stage for a constructive collaboration in developing new, more effective means for reducing suicide attempts and deaths. It does so by providing recommendations based on evidence-based practices which incorporate personal lived experience of recovery and resilience.

*The Way Forward* summarizes eight core values and offers a lens through which suicide prevention can be envisioned to embrace safety and bring hope and meaning to those in suicidal despair. *The Way Forward’s* Core Values were generated through extensive dialogue of the Action Alliance’s SASTF members and based in the tenets of mental health recovery developed through decades of work by peer advocates, behavioral health professionals, and community feedback. The Core Values reflect the consensus perspective and correspond with many protective factors that counter risk for suicidal thinking and behavior.

“For too long the voice of millions of suicide attempt survivors, like myself, and the value of our experience has been discounted. Now we have come together to provide what could be the most meaningful and impactful contributors to reducing suicide – lived experience – and a new way forward,” said Eduardo Vega, MA, SASTF Co-Lead and Executive Director, Mental Health Association of San Francisco. “Our untold stories of hope and recovery are bridges to developing new ideas, new questions, and new insights into reducing future suicide attempts and deaths. Our “lived expertise” as people who have been there and recovered is now being embraced and utilized. In 2014, suicide attempt survivors are uniting to spur the fields of suicide prevention

and behavioral health to incorporate our voices, our experiences, and our perspective on saving lives.”

In the past several months, there has been a considerable movement, from those with lived experience, to be an integral part of suicide prevention as it relates to consensus recommendations for programs, practices, and policies. In March 2014, a landmark meeting, the [\*Summit on Lived Experience in Suicide Prevention\*](#), was one of the first times in history that a major national initiative, the Action Alliance’s [Zero Suicide](#) priority has engaged with suicide attempt survivors to strategize directions for fostering healthier communities and preventing suicide deaths. In April 2014, the American Association of Suicidology’s Board of Directors unanimously approved the creation of a [new division](#) to represent people with lived experience and suicide attempt survivors and the people who love and care about them. DeQuincy Lezine, Ph.D., primary writer of *The Way Forward*, will serve as inaugural chair.

“We are experiencing a pivotal time in the history of suicide prevention in this country. We are embracing those with lived experience to broaden and shape the future of suicide prevention,” explained John Draper, PhD, who serves with Vega as a SASTF Co-Lead and is Project Director, National Suicide Prevention Lifeline. “Their experience in finding hope and meaning is embodied in *The Way Forward*, and their recommendations in this seminal document will lead us in directions that could bring hope and meaning to millions of others in suicidal crisis.”

### **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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