

**McHENRY COUNTY
MENTAL HEALTH BOARD**

**QPR GATEKEEPER TRAINING
FOR SUICIDE PREVENTION**



Empowering Minds, Transforming Lives

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MISSION

To provide leadership to ensure the prevention and treatment of mental illness, developmental disabilities and substance abuse by identifying, planning, coordinating, fostering development, and contracting for quality services for all citizens of McHenry County, Illinois.

VISION

All McHenry County residents experience optimal mental wellness through access to an integrated system of behavioral healthcare services of excellent quality representing a recovery and resiliency focused, consumer driven, and culturally inclusive community-based continuum of care.

VALUES

We lead the way in transforming lives and systems through partnership and planning. We empower individuals and families toward mental wellness and resiliency. We are accountable for quality, cost-effective services. We value diversity in services, staff, and community. We provide education in order to aid recovery and prevention.

In order to accomplish our mission, vision and values, the McHenry County Mental Health Board must collaborate with public and private sectors in providing the resources necessary for the effective functioning of the community mental health system.

A VERY SPECIAL THANKS TO THE McHENRY COUNTY COMMUNITY FOUNDATION FOR PARTNERING TO BRING QPR GATEKEEPER TRAINING TO McHENRY COUNTY

TABLE OF CONTENTS

2014 McHENRY COUNTY HEALTHY COMMUNITY STUDY 3

DEPRESSION/ANXIETY AND SUICIDE IN McHENRY COUNTY 3

QPR FOR COMMUNITIES: A SUICIDE RISK REDUCTION PROGRAM 4

THE QPR MODEL 4

McHENRY COUNTY VOLUNTEER QPR GATEKEEPER INSTRUCTORS 5

McHENRY COUNTY VOLUNTEER GATEKEEPER INSTRUCTOR ASSUMPTIONS6

McHENRY COUNTY QPR GATEKEEPER 6

2014 McHENRY COUNTY HEALTHY COMMUNITY STUDY

The “health” of a community extends far beyond the traditional view focused on select health measures and availability of medical resources. Rather, a healthy community encompasses a broad range of community characteristics that define the ingredients of a healthy place to live. With this vision in mind, every four years a McHenry County Healthy Community Study is conducted with the intent to understand and address the county’s most pressing needs, involving partners from diverse organizations, in order to improve the health of County residents.

A thorough understanding of the County’s health was measured using four assessments – each from a different perspective including residents, populations in need of services, community leaders, and descriptors using secondary data sources. Through the assessments, knowledge was gained about the current health status of county residents, demographic trends, social and economic indicators, health behaviors, and utilization of health services. The assessments also attempted to understand the perceptions of community strengths and weaknesses as well as answer questions about the health and human services delivery system, unmet needs, gaps, and barriers to care.

DEPRESSION/ANXIETY AND SUICIDE IN McHENRY COUNTY

More than one in five (21.0%) survey respondents and household members report that they have been diagnosed by a health professional as experiencing depression. Prevalence is highest among adults 18-64 at 28.6%, dropping to 10.8% among children under 18. Anxiety/panic disorders are slightly less common but close to these levels with 18.6% suffering from these mental health problems -- 27.2% ages 18-64 and 10.3% for children up to age 18. Among seniors 65 years and older, more persons report being depressed at 14.4% than having Alzheimer’s disease (10.2%); anxiety/panic disorders affect 7.4% of seniors in the survey sample.

The survey also contained a question about suicide. One in twenty (5.0%) respondents said they had thought about suicide as did 3.6% of household members. Very few (0.9% respondents, 0.5% other household members) attempted suicide.

Suicides took the life of 41 local residents in 2010, a one-year high and more than twice as many as had occurred annually in 1999-2003. The 2008-2010 McHenry County suicide rate of 10.9 per 100,000 stands 59% above the 1999-2001 figure.

McHenry County Healthy Community Study (2014) Health Systems Research; University of Illinois College of Medicine, Rockford, IL

Further community information confirms that suicides took the lives of 40 individuals in 2012, 31 individuals in 2013, and 33 individuals in 2014.

QPR FOR COMMUNITIES: A SUICIDE RISK REDUCTION PROGRAM

The QPR model (QPR stands for Question, Persuade and Refer, an emergency intervention undertaken upon the recognition of suicide warning signs in someone known to the QPR-trained person) is a comprehensive community-based suicide risk reduction and prevention project. The project is designed to be carried out within a defined community and evaluated for effectiveness. The main goal of this systems approach to suicide prevention education and training is to build collective community competence through broad, systematic training of individual family members, key community “gatekeepers,” and all health and mental health care professionals. In addition to the community’s sense of shared responsibility to prevent suicide, the resulting educational outcome should: 1) enhance measures of individual self-efficacy in how to assist suicidal family members or loved ones, 2) improve the performance of key community gatekeepers in assisting suicidal person (e.g., law enforcement personnel) and 3) improve measures of clinical competence and confidence in healthcare professionals who assess, manage and treat suicidal consumers. When these outcomes have been successfully achieved, a fall in community rates of morbidity and mortality associated with suicidal behaviors is predicted.

At the community level, both lay citizens and professionals must work together to achieve two common goals:

- A greater sense of shared responsibility for the prevention of suicide
- A greater sense of community competence in learning the skills necessary to prevent suicide attempts and completions

THE QPR MODEL

Like CPR in the “Chain of Survival” for medical emergencies, successful QPR requires the following:

- **Early recognition of suicide warning signs.** The sooner warning signs are detected and help sought, the better the outcome of a suicide crisis will be.
- **Early QPR.** Asking someone about the presence of suicidal thoughts and feelings opens up a conversation, lowers risk and may lead to a referral for help.
- **Early intervention and referral.** Referral to local resources or calling 1-800-SUICIDE for evaluation and possible referral is critical, as most people thinking about suicide are suffering from an undiagnosed and/or untreated mental illness or substance abuse disorder for which excellent treatments exist. Also, the offering of hope and social and spiritual support can often avert a suicide attempt
- **Early professional assessment and treatment.** As with any illness, early detection and treatment results in better outcomes and fewer lives lost to suicide

The QPR Gatekeeper Training for Suicide Prevention originated in 1996, and since then, more than 2,500 organizations and communities (including private companies, colleges and universities, mental health departments, and the military) have implemented the training. There are more than 8,500 certified instructors, and they have delivered the intervention to more than 1,000,000 people in all 50 States, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico, as well as in Australia, Canada, France, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Qatar, and Spain.

McHENRY COUNTY VOLUNTEER QPR GATEKEEPER INSTRUCTORS

The QPR (Question, Persuade, and Refer) Gatekeeper Training for Suicide Prevention is a brief educational program designed to teach "gatekeepers"--those who are strategically positioned to recognize and refer someone at risk of suicide (e.g., parents, friends, neighbors, teachers, coaches, caseworkers, police officers)--the warning signs of a suicide crisis and how to respond by following three steps:

- Question the individual's desire or intent regarding suicide
- Persuade the person to seek and accept help
- Refer the person to appropriate resources

A QPR Gatekeeper is someone who has received at least the one-hour *QPR Gatekeeper Training for Suicide Prevention* course. This program may have been provided as part of a larger educational program. A QPR Gatekeeper receives an accompanying QPR booklet and summary resource card as part of their one-hour training. A QPR Gatekeeper is someone in a position to recognize a crisis and warning signs that someone maybe be contemplating suicide. Based on enhanced awareness and familiarity with the QPR action steps, this parent, friend, teacher, minister, nurse, office supervisor, family member or other is in a unique and strategic position to initiate an intervention or contact someone who can.

To be a Certified QPR Gatekeeper Instructor requires that the individual be at least 21-years-old and able to work with small groups in an educational format. Preferred qualifications include good community connections, access to potential gatekeeper training audiences, good speaking skills and a passion to prevent suicide. A mental health or healthcare educational background is beneficial, but not necessary.

A Certified QPR Gatekeeper Instructor has received at least eight hours of specialized training in the QPR suicide prevention method and approach, has all the necessary current and copyrighted tools for quality training and receives and reviews quarterly training updates, research summaries and the QPR Times newsletter. Re-certification is required every three years.

McHenry County Mental Health Board has received “Certified Gatekeeper Instructor” commitments from approximately 20 local individuals representing systems including behavioral health, schools, law enforcement, human resources and the faith community.

(8-hour, on-site QPR Gatekeeper Instructor Certification Course (includes 3-year certification; Instructor's Manual; teaching DVD; audio CD of QPR Gatekeeper Training; Counseling Suicidal People; Suicide: The Forever Decision; 25 Ask a Question Save a Life booklets; phone and email technical assistance and consultation from the QPR Institute; and quality assurance materials)

McHENRY COUNTY VOLUNTEER GATEKEEPER INSTRUCTOR ASSUMPTIONS

Volunteer QPR Gatekeepers must be fully informed, not only about the community resources available to them as citizens, but specifically who they should contact for support, consultation and/or advice when faced with what might prove to be a difficult intervention. Volunteer QPR Gatekeeper Instructors would be expected to attend community trainings, resource fairs, etc. to remain informed of community resources. The Mental Health Board Training and Community Development Associate will serve as a primary contact for support and all QPR Instructors and Gatekeepers will be educated and informed regarding the services of the McHenry County Crisis Line.

Once trained, a QPR Gatekeeper Instructor is certified for 3 years. Each Instructor would be encouraged to complete a minimum of 3 trainings per year over the course of the certification. Trainings and targeted populations would be the responsibility of each trainer. The MHB would ask that each time training is conducted, the QPR Instructor will log into a web based portal created by the McHenry County Behavioral Health Foundation in order to record the total number of training attendees and the targeted audience. An evaluation component is also required so it would be assumed that each instructor would collect training evaluations and submit those evaluations to the Mental Health Board for compilation. Each year, the Mental Health Board will publish data directly related to the QPR Suicide Prevention Initiative.

McHENRY COUNTY QPR GATEKEEPERS

QPR trained citizen gatekeepers help create a community safety net for suicidal people by identifying them, questioning them, and persuading them to accept a referral for professional evaluation and/or care. Initiating this chain of events is a significant responsibility, not unlike initiating CPR until professional medical help arrives.

QPR GATEKEEPER: A QPR Gatekeeper is someone who has received at least the one-hour *QPR Gatekeeper Training for Suicide Prevention* course. This program may have been provided as part of a larger educational program. A QPR Gatekeeper receives an accompanying QPR booklet and summary resource card as part of their one-hour training. A QPR Gatekeeper is someone in a position to recognize a crisis and warning signs that someone maybe be contemplating suicide. Based on enhanced awareness and familiarity with the QPR action steps, this parent, friend, teacher, minister, nurse, office supervisor, family member or other is in a unique and strategic position to initiate an intervention or contact someone who can.

For volunteer QPR Gatekeepers to be effective, community professionals must help and support their courageous efforts. The skills necessary to properly evaluate relative suicide risk, imminence of a suicidal act and what, if any, treatment may be needed, is clearly beyond the skills of citizen volunteers.

To be successful, the actions of citizen gatekeepers must be acknowledged and supported by the professional community. When a QPR intervention is attempted, and if a referral is made, professional providers must respond. Professionals must not only endorse QPR Gatekeepers as credible suicide prevention volunteers, but must also honor and respect their efforts to make life-saving interventions.