

Postvention Australia Guidelines

Summary

Australian Institute for Suicide Research and Prevention & Postvention Australia (2017)
Postvention Australia Guidelines: A resource for organisations and individuals providing services to people bereaved by suicide.

Prepared by *Life in Mind* in conjunction with the Australian Institute for
Suicide Research and Prevention

Postvention

What is Postvention?

Postvention involves activities related to the help and support of people exposed to suicide. This may include community members, acquaintances, colleagues and family members. Research suggests approximately 135 people are exposed to each suicide death ⁽¹⁻³⁾.

Many people who are exposed to suicide will be moderately affected by the suicide death. A smaller number will be bereaved, mourning the loss of the relationship.

Postvention is an essential component of support and is fundamentally based on a relationship between people and their community.

It is imperative that postvention takes account of the broad continuum of people who have a relationship or identify with someone who dies by suicide ⁽¹⁾. This is particularly important for 'high-risk' and marginalised communities.

“Postvention is therefore a significant form of suicide prevention” ^(10; p9)

Different grief reactions are experienced throughout every course of bereavement. Although bereavement experiences are individual, they share similar features and reactions. People bereaved by suicide, akin to people bereaved by other types of death, experience general grief reactions such as shock, denial, sadness, confusion and anger.

Research has shown that in addition to these feelings, people bereaved by suicide may show higher levels of shame, responsibility, guilt, rejection, blame (self and/or others), personal and public stigma and trauma ⁽¹⁻⁷⁾.

Assistance after a suicide death can have an influence on long-term outcomes of bereavement ^(2&4). This can be either clinical (professional services) or non-clinical (support and information from frontline workers such as police, staff from the coroner's office, or a funeral director).

If information on this page raises any issues for you or if you need immediate assistance, please contact any of the crisis helplines: [National crisis support numbers](#).



‘Postvention Australia Guidelines: A resource for organisations and individuals providing services to people bereaved by suicide’

Australian Institute for Suicide Research and Prevention & Postvention Australia, Griffith University

The resource, ‘Postvention Australia Guidelines: A resource for organisations and individuals providing services to people bereaved by suicide’ provides a framework for mitigating the negative impacts of exposure to suicide. The Postvention Australia Guidelines provide support to organisations who may provide postvention services, but also groups or individuals in contact with the bereaved such as frontline workers, health care professionals, social workers, funeral directors, and volunteers.

The Guidelines provide this support by describing:

- the roles of managers, ensuring accessible and understood protocols are available for front-line staff,
- the importance of all staff understanding the ethical issues involved and having up-to-date knowledge of available and accessible services.

Furthermore, the guidelines provide tools to build the capacity of organisations, individuals, families and communities to respond to suicide for specific population groups and settings.

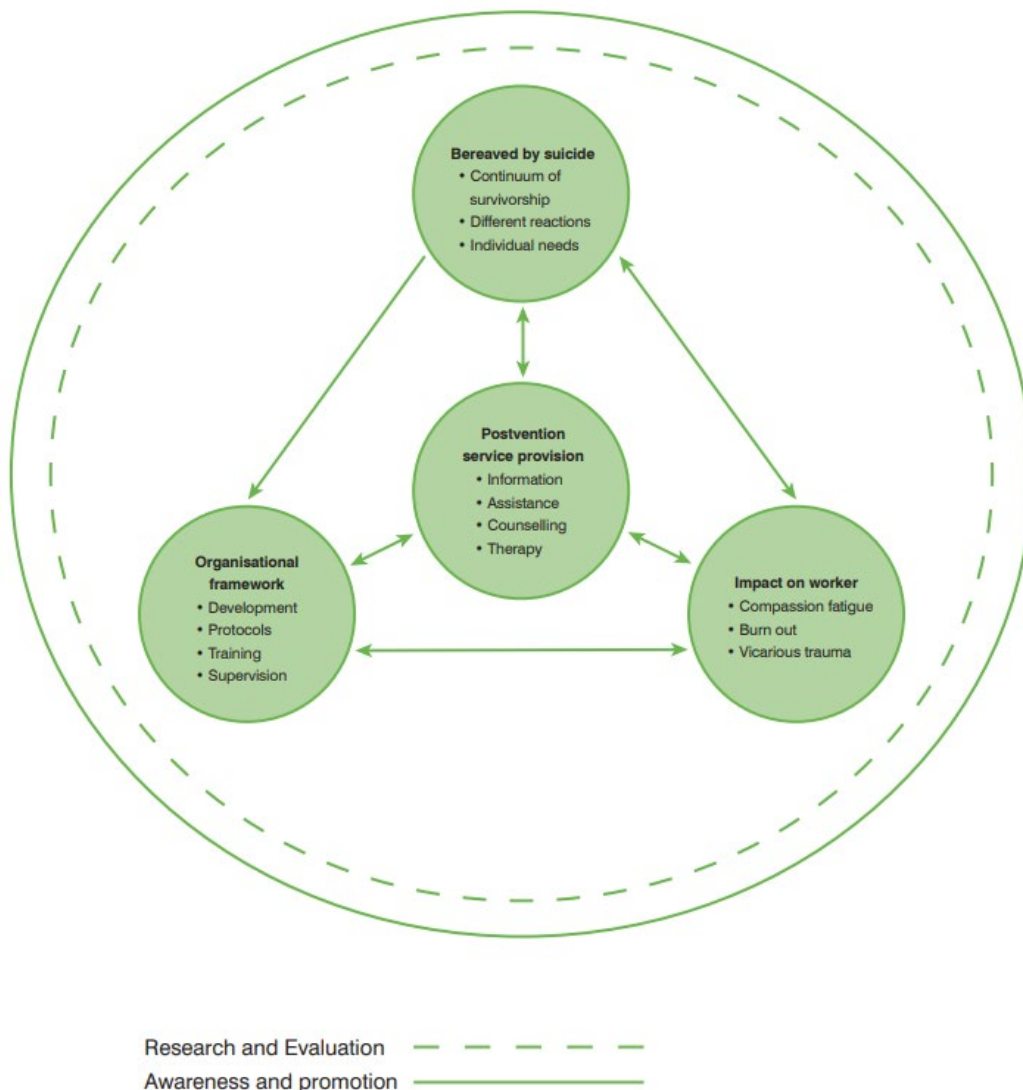


Figure 1 (AISRAP, 2017) Elements of postvention service provision



Postvention service provision should include the following (10):

Responding to the needs of suicide bereaved:

- Understand the diverse needs of people impacted by suicide and their changing needs over time (including emotional and practical needs)
- Consider a 'No wrong door' approach in facilitating referrals to other or appropriate services, ensuring that the bereaved are supported in finding the right services
- Offer a flexible approach that considers both passive and proactive services
- Explore tailoring services by age, culture and kinship
- Engage lived experience, including people bereaved by suicide in service development

Provision of culturally sensitive and appropriate services:

- Work respectfully and inclusively paying attention to cultural diversity
- Encourage appropriate use of language to avoid stigmatising service users

Provision of appropriate and accurate information and resources:

- Ensure that the suicide bereaved receive appropriate and essential information in a timely manner
- Have information available and accessible in different formats (such as hard copies, Internet, mobile phone apps) and ensure they reach the target audience

The Postvention Guidelines succeed in incorporating the work of a number of organisations in the postvention sector in Australia and internationally. However, given the document is a general guide for postvention services for people bereaved by suicide, it is important to remember that every community is unique and like any intervention, postvention strategies need to consider the characteristics and context of the specific community in question.

More information

This content was developed in collaboration with [Australian Institute for Suicide Research and Prevention](https://www.lifeinmindaustralia.com.au/organisations/australian-institute-for-suicide-research-and-prevention-aisrap).

Australian Institute for Suicide Research and Prevention (AISRAP)

<https://www.lifeinmindaustralia.com.au/organisations/australian-institute-for-suicide-research-and-prevention-aisrap>

Postvention Support Services

There are a range of services available in Australia to support people who are bereaved by suicide. These include programs to provide direct support (telephone, in person or online counselling), presentations, webinars, training and workshops and research based activities.

A list of programs and services can be found on the *Life in Mind* website at:

<https://www.lifeinmindaustralia.com.au/programs-resources/programs-services>



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