**Advocacy**

“Change will not come if we wait for some other person or some other time!”

Advocacy is simple. All you have to do is voice your beliefs to people of influence. Even if you aren’t a public speaker, you can change the minds of others. When you voice your beliefs with passion, you persuade. Legislators are people just like us, with lives and families and interests like yours. They are doing a job for us, representing us, and so they need to know what we think and how we feel. Only we can tell them how their actions in the legislature can make a difference in real people’s lives.

Won’t you share your story?

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**Join the Team!**

Suicide doesn’t discriminate; it touches every population, every ethnicity, and every age group. Our Team represents EVERY voice. We welcome and encourage everyone to join us!

Contact us for more information or to sign up and receive your GA CAT’s information Package.

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**Georgia’s Suicide Prevention Community Action Team**

Bring action and advocacy to your community!

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SPAN-GA

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ACTION: Activate your community’s efforts.

Joining the GA CAT’s and becoming a Georgia Community Advocate is partially about advocating at the Capitol, which is simply about making connections and sharing ideas! It is also about activating your community’s efforts by doing one or all of many local activities. Some are listed below. Looking at the list of options, you can design your own commitment to meet the needs of your schedule or the amount of time that you would like to commit. Here are a few ideas for how it MIGHT work, but the actual steps you take, and the order you take them in, are up to you.

1. Organize an Email Action Network among your own circle of family and friends who would be willing to support simple suicide prevention efforts in Georgia, and use their connections to grow your network further. Then, you activate your email network team, as you need them.

2. When an action is required, contact your network via your email list. Then ask them to take the action required and report back to you, all via email. These actions could be legislative, but they could also be a variety of things like volunteers needed for awareness events, or a radio or TV opportunity needs a speaker, etc. The steps that you need to take will always be clear and mapped out for you.

3. Sign up to also be connected to the National Field Advocate program. This program works the same way as the Community Advocate program using your same email network, but interaction is with your Legislature in Washington, DC.

4. Collect signatures on petitions*. These are available each year through SPAN-GA. The more petitions, the louder our voice! You can get signatures yourself, use your network, or ask outside individuals or groups to participate.

5. Start or join a local suicide prevention coalition.

6. Become a Suicide Prevention Educator*.

7. Connect with media to share materials on responsible reporting of suicides and develop relationships to access for media exposure as needed. * Materials provided to you.

8. Attend and participate in Suicide Prevention Day at the Capitol, inform and encourage your network to attend the event. Talk with your legislators about the needs in your community.

9. Distribute suicide prevention and survivor support materials to your area churches, funeral homes, police and first responders, hospitals, physicians; nursing and assisted living homes, schools, colleges and other identified groups.

10. Promote use of www.gspin.org, the statewide information network for suicide prevention, intervention and aftercare.

11. Volunteer and participate in suicide prevention walks, runs, motorcycle rides, and other events*.

12. Develop and/or distribute local area resource directories/lists and other materials in your area.

13. Encourage others to join the Community Action Team. Continue to build and expand your network and increase awareness of suicide and suicide prevention.

14. And many more possibilities to bring awareness, education, and services to your community

Contact us at spangeorgia@aol.com for more information or to sign up and get your GA CAT’s member package.

How much of my time will it take to be a GA CAT?

Being a GA CAT can take as little or as much time as you want to commit to the program. You can look at all of the activities that are suggested, some of which are listed here, and pick and choose what will fit your schedule.

What are the responsibilities of a GA CAT?

Your primary goal would be to create an email network of people interested in suicide prevention. Then you will look through the menu of options and see what tasks you think you would like to add to your responsibilities. You can do as little or as much as you can. Just design what works for you.

Would I have to speak to legislators?

Survivors have a compelling message. Professionals and members of the suicide prevention community bring another strong perspective. You just need to be yourself. Beyond that, if you choose advocacy, you will be trained in how to deliver an appropriate message. At the Legislative Institute held on Capitol Day each year, we will make sure you are comfortable with the job at hand.

We need your voice! Won’t you join us?