

Lifeline Newcastle and Hunter

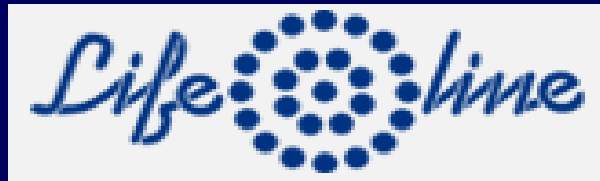
Life Matters

Suicide Intervention Program



Lifeline Newcastle and Hunter

- ▶ Lifeline Newcastle and Hunter has been supporting people for 37 years.
- ▶ There are currently 196 telephone counsellors and 14 face-to-face counsellors.
- ▶ All are volunteers.
- ▶ “Lifeline is committed to working co-operatively with others to find practical ways of bringing realistic hope to people whose lives or safety are at risk through suicide”



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Suicide in Newcastle and Hunter

- ▶ In 1996/97 **9,360** people came into contact with Health services due to suicidal ideation. This is approximately 2 out of every 100 people in the Hunter thinking of suicide. (HAHS, 1996/7)
- ▶ Lifeline receives 1-3 calls every day relating to suicide.

NSPS

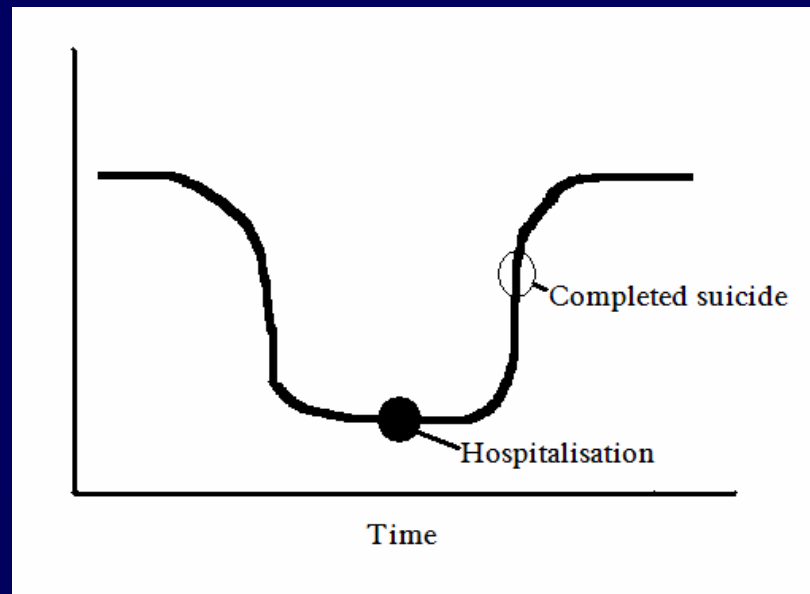
- ▶ The program is funded under the National Suicide Prevention Strategy through the Department of Health and Ageing.
- ▶ The program is funded until December 2004

.....Because Life Matters

- ▶ Community-based intervention program which aims to increase connectedness and resilience for people at risk of suicide.
- ▶ Reducing the rate of re-admission into health services following a suicide attempt or heightened suicidal ideation.

- ▶ An individualised program of face to face counselling combined with a telephone 'buddy' system.
- ▶ Following a first suicide attempt or heightened suicidal ideation.
- ▶ *Very* short waiting list

- ▶ People are at highest risk following discharge from hospital or mental health services – the program was designed specifically to support people during this time.



What's involved?

- ▶ Weekly face to face counselling for up to 12 weeks.
- ▶ During the first 6 weeks clients also receive the support of a telephone counsellor 'buddy' who is available to provide a 'care-call' to the client up to 3 times per week.

No-Harm contracts

No Harm contracts are an integral part of the program.

The contract reinforces the commitment of both the client and the counsellor to the process.

It also spells out the strategies that the client will use if feeling suicidal during the program

- Internal resources
- External resources

Buddies

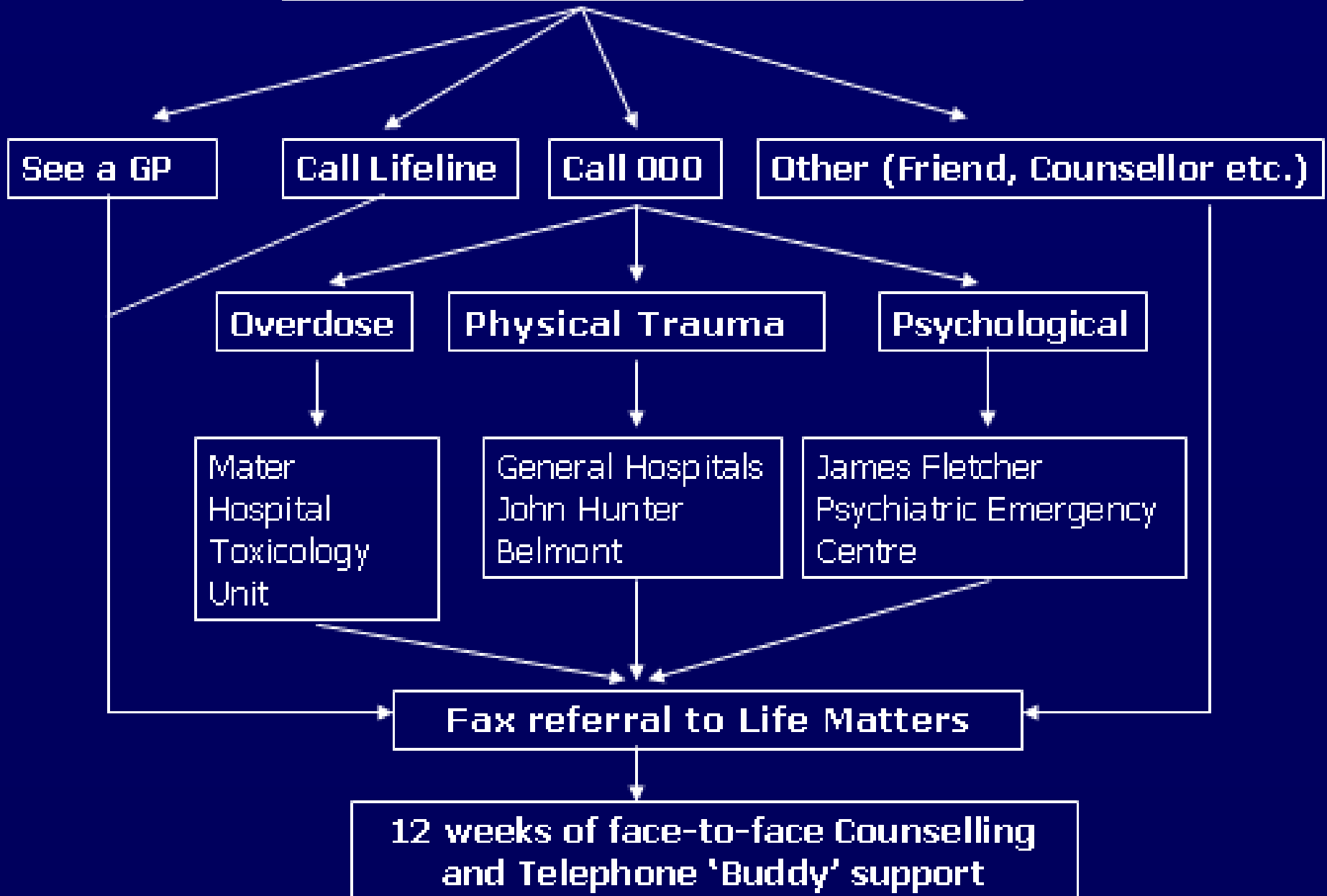
- Provide care calls at times pre-determined **by the client**.

For example: A client may feel particularly vulnerable on Sunday evenings – and can organise to speak to their 'buddy' at this time.

- Check in with clients to check how they are coping. Working with the strategies outlined in face to face counselling.

The main role of the buddy is to let the client know that there are people who care that they are alive.

Person at Risk of Suicide

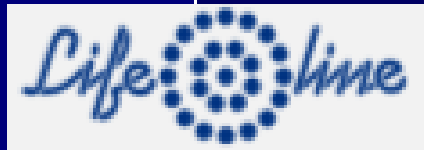


Assessment appointment

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12

Weekly counselling
appointment
(12 weeks)

Buddy calls 3
times/week
(6 weeks)



Linked to other support networks

Collaboration with other services

- ▶ Liaison person at each referral service
 - Mater Hospital
 - John Hunter Hospital
 - James Fletcher Psychiatric Emergency Centre
 - Mental Health Teams
- ▶ Referral Protocols developed after 3-month pilot period.

- ▶ Responsive to clients (no waiting time).
- ▶ Catered to the individual needs of clients.
- ▶ *People supporting people.*

Support for families and friends

Program to support families and friends of those at risk

These people are the first port of call for the clients

The group program aims to support those who care for Life Matters clients – so that they can effectively support their loved ones.

Difficulties

- ▶ Inappropriate referrals
- ▶ Access issues
- ▶ Dependency issues
- ▶ Limitations and constraints of service

Why is Life Matters unique?

- ▶ The Life Matters program provides:
- ▶ *Immediate response to suicidal clients*
- ▶ *By an NGO*
- ▶ *Run by volunteers*
- ▶ *In partnership with Health Services*
- ▶ *.....cheaply!*

Evaluation

- ▶ Pre- and Post- surveys of both client and counsellor
- ▶ N=68
- ▶ Clients report a decrease in:
 - thoughts of suicide
 - alcohol/drug use as a means of coping
- ▶ And an increase in:
 - accessing support networks available to them (connectedness)

- ▶ The program fulfills a need to provide access to counselling support for suicidal clients on a low income by providing the service free of charge.
- ▶ Currently available in Newcastle, Singleton and Muswellbrook. Maitland beginning in May 2004.

“Lifeline are the only ones who do not get angry at me when I talk about suicide”

“It was great to get a couple of phone calls on the weekend, actually I don't think I would still be here without them”

- ▶ The Life Matters Program demonstrates that NGO's and Health services can work closely to effectively support clients.
- ▶ It is essential that the Government recognises the value of this service and ensures that it receives funding beyond 2004.