

# A CALL TO ACTION: THE ALBERTA SUICIDE PREVENTION STRATEGY

A CALL TO ACTION: The Alberta Suicide Prevention Strategy was launched in 2006. The Community Helpers Program is one of the initiatives being implemented within this province-wide strategy.

The Community Helpers Program aligns with A CALL TO ACTION: The Alberta Suicide Prevention Strategy by:

- Providing a model for community capacity building related to the issue of youth mental health promotion
- Reducing stigma by increasing community knowledge on mental health issues
- Improving interventions for those who may be at risk of suicide

*"In every community, there are people to whom others naturally turn when they need help.*

*They are people from all walks of life and all ages. The one thing that they have in common is that they are considered by others to be helpers."*

Redekopp, 1993

**For more information about the local Community Helpers Program please contact:**

 **Life-Role Development Group Ltd.**



## COMMUNITY HELPERS PROGRAM



## BACKGROUND

Suicide is a leading cause of death among Albertans. Each year almost 500 Albertans die by suicide.

Tragically, this is just the tip of the iceberg. For every death there are nearly six hospitalizations and more than 15 emergency room visits for self-inflicted injuries.

Research has shown that when youth and young adults experience mental health problems the vast majority will turn to a friend or an adult ally, or may not disclose to anyone.



## WHAT IS THE COMMUNITY HELPERS PROGRAM?

The *Community Helpers* Program provides the mechanisms to identify and support existing “natural” helpers for youth and young adults in the community.

The *Community Helpers* program does not create volunteers but finds a way, through an anonymous survey, to discover the community members who youth and young adults already relate to when they have a mental health problem.

Once identified the helpers are offered opportunities to learn more about mental health issues and training to strengthen their support skills.

The intent of the program is to build a bridge between the informal and formal support for youth in the community and to provide awareness of existing supports and services in the community.



The *Community Helpers* Program, initially developed by Concordia College with funding through the national Stay-in-School initiative, delivered under the auspices of Human Resources Development Canada (1994), has been updated and revised by the Life-Role Development Group Limited in partnership with the Alberta Health Services.

*Community Helpers* is a program adapted with permission from the Comprehensive Health Education Foundation's (Seattle, Washington) *Natural Helpers*® program.