

## **Retrospective Fatality Analysis Postmortem Investigation and Ethical Values**

### **Learning Objective:**

1. Demonstrating risk and protective factors identified in the protocol
2. Increase knowledge of corrected verbiage to be used by a suicide awareness expert
3. Discuss community engagement in conversation about suicide prevention
4. Inform future suicide prevention efforts

**Abstract:** Retrospective Fatality Analysis (RFA) is a comprehensive exploration of the biopsychosocial and environmental factors that precede an individual's death by suicide, or other unnatural death. By expanding the methodology of the psychological autopsy, RFA gathers wide-ranging information about the social context in which the loved one lived, including the impact of social disruptions. RFA recognizes that suicide is a public health problem that is not remedied by clinical solutions alone. By identifying factors in the social environment that contributed to a suicide, RFA plays a vital role in suicide prevention research, program development, and, ultimately, in helping loss survivors make meaning of the suicide of their loved one. In this presentation, Retrospective Fatality Analysts and loss survivors will describe the beneficial impact of meaning-making that comes from discussing a loved one's life and death, clarifying the life events, relationships, and the sociocultural context of suicide. Loss survivors will share how taking part in this process helped them reframe their loss narratives, and find meaning in their loss. Loss survivors will also discuss how others can better understand the experiences of other survivors and engage people and communities in conversations about suicide and suicide prevention. During the presentation, the ethical use of RFA and its reasoning and application in the military, clinical settings, organizations, and policy change will also be discussed.

**Presenters:** Janet Schnell, MSW, CareATC and Anne Kelly, PhD, Dakota Wesleyan University

**Bio:** Janet Schnell, MSW, LCSW completed her masters degree in Social Work in 2010 at the University of Southern Indiana. She is currently in practice with CareATC serving the needs of employees in a commercial furnishings company. Janet specializes in suicide prevention, intervention, and after a suicide occurs; depression; anxiety; and substance abuse. She has experience in Dialectical Behavioral Therapy (DBT), Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT), Brief-Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (B-CBT), Motivational Interviewing, and Narrative Therapies. Janet is a suicide prevention instructor for Question, Persuade, Refer (QPR), She is a suicide prevention trainer for Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST). She helped to develop 1 of the first 2 Local Outreach to Suicide Survivors (LOSS) Teams in Indiana. Janet is a founding member of the Retrospective Fatality Analysis - Consultants (RFA-C). The protocol is an investigative and research instrument with the goal of informing suicide prevention by

using the stories of those who died by suicide. She was a certified Psychological Autopsy Investigator by the American Association of Suicidology. Janet is a public speaker sharing her experience as a suicide loss survivor and becoming a social worker after her brother's death.

**Bio:** Anne Kelly, Ph.D. is the Dean of the College of Business, Education, and Social Science and Chair of the Department of Psychology and Behavioral Sciences at Dakota Wesleyan University, where she has taught since 2000. She earned her M.A. and Ph.D. in experimental psychology from the University of Nevada, Reno. As a fatality analyst, she has worked with bereaved individuals and families in several states at the request of suicide prevention organizations and loss survivors who have established contact privately. As a Certified QPR (Question, Persuade, Refer) Trainer and Adult Mental Health First Aid Trainer, she supports suicide prevention by educating the public about signs of suicidal behavior. She is the Chair of the Community Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Coalition in Mitchell, SD, and served as the President of the Board of Directors for the Lost & Found Association, a not-for-profit organization that aims to reduce risk factors that contribute to suicide among adolescents and young adults. In addition, Anne has served on two mental health task forces of the South Dakota legislature and the State Advisory Committee for South Dakota Youth Suicide Prevention.