



ASIST in Sports aims to cut suicide rate

BEN FRASER

A PROGRAM in south-west Victoria delivered by the Greater Green Triangle University (GGTU) Department of Rural Health has engaged local sporting stars to tackle suicide at a grass roots level.

The Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST) in Sports program aims to reduce suicides and suicide attempts through supporting players, coaches, parents and trainers.

The program trains participants to identify signs of suicide risk, connect with potentially suicidal people and help them to create a plan to support their immediate safety and link them into services for further help.

The two-day workshops will be delivered by local mental health academics Chris Healey and Kate Schlicht in Warrnambool on February and March, and is supported by local sporting stars and ambassadors of the program, AFL footballer Jordan Lewis and ANZ Championship netballer Sarah Wall. Mr Lewis hails from Warrnambool, and Ms Wall from Camperdown.

ASIST was first offered to south-west Victorian sports clubs earlier this year and reached 62 participants from 12 different sporting clubs and organisations.

The workshops are open to all sporting organisations, particularly those connected to people in the high risk age groups of men under 44 and women under 34.

Mr Healey said the program was a proven intervention model that helps participants to become more willing, ready and able to intervene with someone at risk of suicide to reduce the incidence of suicide.

"ASIST in Sport is about having more people able to recognise someone at risk and to have the skills to keep them safe until they can get the assistance they need," Mr Healey said.

The workshops are being funded by the Rotary Club Central of Warrnambool and supported by Lifeline South West Victoria and the Hampden Football Netball League, allowing the \$300 fee to be waived for participants.

The workshops will be held on February 18-19 and March 21-22, at Headspace at 210 Timor St, Warrnambool.

For more information, contact Lifeline manager of service development, Megan Walsh, on 5559 0555.