Date: July 2010  
To: Doug Hemp  
From: Natalie A. Keffer  
Re: A Brief Examination of Homicide/Suicide of the Elderly in Idaho

PURPOSE
This memo was created in response to your inquiry of the Center for the Study of Aging (CSA). As part of its mission, the CSA strives to act as a resource to the community as well as increase awareness of issues related to the aging and elderly in Idaho. The CSA is a joint venture Co-sponsored by the Colleges of Health Sciences & Social Sciences and Public Affairs, founded in 2004.

The request required an examination of murder or homicide followed by suicide among older adults. According to your information and local news reports, a total of 3 murders or homicides followed by suicide among older adults occurred in the last year.

The questions of the inquirer, to be addressed by this examination are:

1. What resources are available?
2. What data is available?
3. What is the level of concern among community officials concerning this issue?

METHOD
The approach used to answer these questions were direct contacts with various entities within the community. The organizations contacted in this examination were: Idaho Commission on Aging, Area Agency on Aging, Suicide Prevention Action Network, Idaho Suicide Prevention Council, AARP, Ada County Coroner, Bureau of Community and Environmental Health Division of Health of Health and Welfare, Idaho Trauma Registry, Bureau of Vital Records and Health Statistics of Health and Welfare and End of Life Coalition, see page 3 & 4.

RESULTS
Currently, Idaho does not have any systems in place to record murder or homicide followed by suicide of the elderly. The present systems recognize suicide or homicide individually, but do not necessarily correlate the two causes of death. Current procedures in collecting this information and investigating these cases, may limit the ability to record these incidents and accurately represent this data. For example, accreditation standards may dictate some processes.

Responses to the specific questions are:

1. There are many resources available to develop knowledge on this topic such as all of the organizations contacted for this examination.
2. Presently, the data collected is focused on time, direct cause, and location of death and is available through the Department of Health and Welfare- Bureau of Vital Records and Health Statistics. There is data available regarding incidence of death in older adults; however it is not recorded based on this specific issue.
3. Community officials and agencies are concerned about this issue, however insufficient funding and lack of attention at state and federal levels, force community officials to focus their efforts in a different direction.

Although at first glance this seems disheartening, this presents a profound opportunity for community collaboration and change to be made in Idaho.

NEXT STEPS
The number of people 65 years and older will double by the year 2030. As the aging population increases, an increased need for funding to support work related to the elderly will progressively become an issue. Topics such as these will continue to be at the forefront of this transition.

1. A more focused study on murder or homicide followed by suicide cases with enhanced collection strategies such as doing a record comparison with Police records and vital statistics will illuminate the current incidence of this issue to provide basis for future funding, policies, etc.
2. A detailed study of current systems approach to this issue in other states may identify strategies for pilot testing in Idaho.
3. The Idaho Summit on Elder Abuse and Exploitation will be held at Boise State University in June 2011 and allow for a unique opportunity of community collaboration between local agencies, organizations and systems critical to supporting issues related to the aging and elderly in Idaho.
Notes

Inquirer: Doug Hemp, Hearts for Hospice, Spiritual Care Coordinator, Ph: 389-2276

Time of Conversation:
Doug - 6/14/10, 10:00am
Doug - 6/22/10, 1:00pm

Question: Information regarding 3 homicide suicides (wife dementia-August, cancer- January, and March/April?) July Hospice doctor downtown (male suicides) - seniors and geriatrics demographic.

Questions:

1. What resources are available?
2. What data is available?
3. What is the level of concern among community officials concerning this issue?

Summary of Contacts made in regard to this issue::
1. ICOA – Pam Catt-Oliason
   a. White paper on suicide/mental health and the elderly on behalf of the Governor’s [appointed] council chaired by Kim Kane
   b. 2009 Suicide data for Idaho
   c. Suggested contacts: Kim Kane, Kathie Garret, Jenny Zorrens, Cheryl Simpson
   d. “Governor’s Behavioral Health Transformation Work Group”
   e. Healthy Ideas http://www.careforelders.org/healthyideas

2. AAA – Jenny Zorrens
   a. Dean Allen- Idaho Board for Elder suicide
   b. PowerPoint - Jerry Reed, PhD long time Director of SPAN USA
   c. Idaho Suicide Prevention Action Network; http://www.spanidaho.org/

3. Kim Kane, Executive Director SPAN Idaho  kkane@spanidaho.orgSPAN
   a. Idaho senior males have the second highest suicide rates in the state, second only to Native American teenage boys.
   b. Suicide Conference in September
   c. Dr. Thomas Joiner at Florida State University - author of Why People Die by Suicide and Myths About Suicide (Speciality in aging research and currently writing a book on the topic) http://www.psy.fsu.edu/faculty/joiner.dp.html
   d. Katie Anderson – Bureau of Vital Records and Health Statistics; andersok@dhw.idaho.gov

4. Kathie Garret, Chairperson, Idaho Suicide Prevention Council, kgarrettidaho@aol.com

5. AARP – Kathy McDougal
   a. Never responded

6. Ada County Coroner
   a. Tanya Flemming, Administrative Assistant
i. Homicide/Suicides (Murder/Suicides are treated similarly to any other homicide or suicide case. The accreditation process does not allow them to be dealt with in any other manner. Therefore, there is no specific data or information that reflects anything special about those cases imparticuliar.

7. ERWIN SONNENBERG, CORONER (Elected official)
   a. Questions:
      1. Accreditation process
         a. 27 medical examiners across the nation
      2. Investigation process
         a. Go to scene, do research, contact physicians, sometimes autopsy and sometimes not

8. Elke Shaw-Tulloch, MHS Chief, Bureau of Community and Environmental Health Division of Health Idaho Department of Health and Welfare
   450 W. State Street, 6th Floor
   PO Box 83720
   Boise, ID 83720-0036
   Ph: 208-334-5950
   Email: shawe@dhw.idaho.gov

9. Ginger Florshinger-Franks

10. Katey Marie Anderson
    Research Analyst, Senior
    Department of Health and Welfare - Bureau of Vital Records and Health Statistics
    Phone: 208.332.7365
    Fax: 208.334.7260
    Email: AndersoK@dhw.idaho.gov

    Or Pam Harder (Supervisor) 208-334-6658.

11. Cheryl Simpson-Whitaker, MSW, President
    Idaho End-of-Life Coalition, Inc.
    President@IdahoEndofLifeCoalition.org
    208-841-1862 Coalition
    208-794-1479 Mobile-Cheryl