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Catholic Lifesaver Corps

# Project Report

*April 2023*



*It is with extreme gratitude that we offer the following report on the Catholic Lifesaver Corps initiative funded, in large part, by the Fulcrum Foundation and operated by our archdiocesan Mental Health Ministry.*

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*CLC Cohort 2 completes ASIST*

## Project Overview

The **Catholic Lifesaver Corps (CLC)** is a partnership between the Department of Pastoral Care & Outreach, LivingWorks Education, and the Fulcrum Foundation. This **pro-life** movement seeks to prevent teen suicides and transform our Catholic schools and parishes into suicide-safer communities. Our program uniquely deploys a **peer-to-peer** model that is proving to be highly effective.

According to the National Institute of Mental Health, suicide is the second leading cause of death among teenagers and young adults in the U.S., which highlights the urgency and importance of CLC's work. Our faith calls us to attend to the margins, including anyone suffering from severe mental health struggles.

The CLC initiative trains high school students (16 & older) in Catholic schools to become certified suicide prevention workshop facilitators for their peers.

Over the course of two 3-day training retreats, students and accompanying adults are trained in [ASIST](#) (Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training), which prepares participants to intervene with those contemplating suicide. They also learn [safeTALK](#), the 4-hour course they will facilitate for their peers.

Upon completing their training, CLC students go on to facilitate a series of safeTALK workshops in their schools and parishes. To date, all training retreats, safeTALK workshops, and materials have been offered for free, courtesy of Fulcrum and other generous donors.

# Project Execution & Results

Following the resounding success of Cohort 1, the Mental Health Committee reopened the [application process](#) for the remaining 9 Catholic high schools. Two additional schools applied (and were accepted) into Cohort 2: **O'Dea High School** in Seattle and **Seton Catholic High School** in Vancouver.

CLC now boasts robust participation from a total of 4 Catholic high schools: Archbishop Murphy, Pope John Paul II, O'Dea, and Seton.

Using the tools and structures developed during Cohort 1, (e.g. *Student application form, teacher recommendation form, disclosure statement, mentor form, training expectation sign-off, etc.*) the new schools were able to mindfully select yet another stellar group of student facilitators. A total of 8 new students and 9 new adults joined the second cohort. This makes for a grand total of 16 student facilitators and 16 ASIST-trained adult intervention specialists. 4 of these adults opted to become certified safeTALK facilitators themselves as well.

Our 2 new schools – following a thoughtful and comprehensive interview, discernment, and orientation process – submitted the following people to Cohort 2:



CLC Cohort 2

## Students

- Keira B.
- Avery G.
- Gabe D.
- Eli W.
- Carter G.
- Nick B.
- Zach D.
- Ben V.

## Adults

- Carol Patton
- Dan Chase
- Daina Galster
- Erik Michels
- Lawrence Kight
- Will Chambers

In addition, the Mental Health Committee submitted the following people to become ASIST trained for the parish workshops:

- Sara Cotto
- Connor Geraghty
- Joe Cotton

The initiative was further supported by the following church personnel in various administrative and pastoral roles:

- Archbishop Etienne
- Bishop Elizondo
- Angela Kison
- Fatima Maldonado
- Amanda Zilke
- Nicholas Ford
- Connor Geraghty
- Deacon Eric Paige
- Cody Herrington (and Palisades staff)
- Anisa Ralls
- Kimberly Abadir
- Joe Cotton



*Playing the 'Game of Fun' in the evening*

We established a series of two 3-day training retreats at the [Archbishop Brunett Retreat Center](#) at the Palisades in Federal Way:

- November 14th – 16th, 2022
- November 28th – 30th, 2022

Our ASIST training was taught by **John and Shirley Swanson**. Our safeTALK train-the-trainer (T4T) course was taught by **David and Cassandra Pina**. We advertised the sample safeTALK workshop, which kicks off the T4T course, to the wider archdiocese. Around 20 ministers, teachers, and parish administrators from around the region joined the CLC students on Nov. 29th and experienced the full safeTALK workshop, free of charge.

In addition, the [Mental Health Ministry](#) sponsored **Isabel Cisneros Rueda**, network builder from CCS, to become both ASIST and T4T trained, making her a safeTALK facilitator in Spanish for Hispanic communities within our parishes and schools.

As the training retreats unfolded, a sense of community and team once again developed as we collectively engaged in prayer, meals, card games, trips to the beach, and interactive evening activities.



The CLC initiative has clearly been blessed by the Holy Spirit as evidenced by how strongly and effortlessly it has taken off.

It was featured in an article in Northwest Catholic: [Teens teach suicide awareness to save lives \(nw catholic.org\)](https://nw catholic.org) and even mentioned in local publications such as Thurston Talk: [Suicide Prevention Program](#).

Most notably, a crew from EWTN traveled to Seattle from Washington D.C. to cover the effort, filming a 5-minute spot with interviews and images of the training retreats: [Cutting-Edge Suicide Prevention Program in the Archdiocese of Seattle](#).

CLC students have suddenly become in high demand at conferences and events, including:

- A national conference of Suicidology in Oregon
- A national conference for the American Foundation of Suicide Prevention (AFSP)
- The NAMI Eastside conference in Redmond
- The Sacred Heart Mental Health Fair in Lacey
- The Mental Health Ministry luncheon on [youth state of affairs](#) in Isaac Orr

## CLC Student Expectations

Each student CLC facilitator has committed to offer at least 2 safeTALK workshops for their school and 2 workshops for nearby parishes before the end of the 2022-2023 school year. Cohort 2 members have further committed to provide at least 2 additional safeTALK workshops for their school and 2 for parishes during the 2023-2024 school year. They might choose to offer more than that. Each safeTALK workshop can have a maximum of 30 participants.



*A CLC student is interviewed for EWTN News*

# Project Impact

Since the dawn of CLC in early 2022, we have been able to make a large impact on our local Catholic communities.

To date, our CLC teams have been able to offer 10 subsequent safeTALK workshops in schools and parishes around the archdiocese, training around 300 people, mostly fellow teens, about how to recognize and respond to the signs and signals of suicidal thought.

More safeTALK workshops are currently in the works including St. Catherine School in North Seattle, the Grays Harbor parishes, St. Joseph in Lynden, Holy Family in Kirkland, etc.

With every additional workshop that CLC offers, we increase the number of eyes and ears in our school hallways and parish campuses that are tuned-in to suicidal warning signs. We continually multiply the pool of people prepared to notice, ask the question, listen, and refer to appropriate resources.

While our model is primarily peer-to-peer, we do find that adult trainees find our teen-led workshops to be very helpful as well. In fact, our O'Dea CLC team trained the entire school faculty in safeTALK, about 50 adults.



As a result, multiple teachers have begun displaying their safeTALK certificates and accompanying stickers, etc. around their classrooms, creating a visible reminder that students are surrounded by caring adults who are comfortable discussing suicide. The CLC effort has successfully helped shift the culture throughout our campuses, truly creating suicide-safer communities.

As news of the CLC has spread throughout the archdiocese, it has produced an unforeseen, yet welcome result. Several school leaders - and even families - have contacted the pastoral care department seeking consultation on specific cases involving students exhibiting suicidal thoughts. We have been able to respond with a combination of skilled consultation, pastoral accompaniment, and connection with ASIST trainings for parents and teachers.

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CLC remains committed to rooting itself in our Catholic faith and spirituality. Every session during Cohort 2's training retreats began with prayer and each evening concluded with extended prayer and song in the chapel. We intentionally ground all efforts in God and Catholic principles that respect life and human dignity.

On November 30th, 2022, we facilitated a full prayer service and commissioning in the ABRC chapel, which was captured in the EWTN news piece. Each student received a blessing and was given the opportunity to reflect on what this experience has meant to them. The sharing that followed was moving and profound. Our young people never cease to amaze, provided we afford them real and meaningful leadership roles. CLC empowers students to be church leaders of today! And they did not disappoint.

Furthermore, the CLC has made an impact that far exceeds what we were expecting, another indicator that the Holy Spirit is indeed at work in our efforts.

LivingWorks, which is an international education company, informed us that they had shared our Northwest Catholic article with groups in Australia. One Australian school - impressed with our effort in Seattle - went so far as to replicate and launch the same model.

To date, at least one cohort of teen safeTALK facilitators has emerged internationally, inspired by our local efforts. Presumably there will be more to come as this peer-to-peer model catches fire and expands, both locally and globally. Following a period of study, we anticipate that LivingWorks may develop their own CLC-based model for other schools and groups.



A school in Australia replicates our Seattle-based CLC model

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# Lessons Learned

We want to continue the active and intentional integration of our Catholic identity and the call of missionary discipleship, so students know that this is a ministry of the Church, and they are the hands and feet of Christ implementing this important work. This proved vital.

We further learned that the mentoring component and monthly team meetings were more challenging to execute than anticipated. Much of this was due to the busyness of student (and adult) life, making scheduling a challenge. Still, we managed to meet fairly regularly with the entire CLC team (via Zoom) which allowed us to stay connected with student well-being. Students reported good mental health while playing this role.



*CLC students study their safeTALK manuals*

In an effort to understand the effectiveness of peer-to-peer training in suicide prevention, the Archdiocese of Seattle and LivingWorks entered into a formal Evaluation Agreement together.

A set of surveys was developed for subsequent safeTALK workshop attendees to complete: a pre-survey and a post-survey, each with its own unique identifier allowing surveys to be matched while participants remained anonymous.

The Pastoral Care & Outreach department has been collecting these surveys from CLC members and passing them along to LivingWorks, allowing them to crunch the data and develop some reporting on the effects of this unique initiative.

The early results are very positive, indeed indicating that people are reporting increased confidence and willingness to engage in a conversation with someone about suicide, a direct result of a peer-led workshop.

We wish to offer deep thanks to **Jetta Hanson** and **Peter Gutierrez** from LivingWorks for producing the following encouraging graphs/charts.



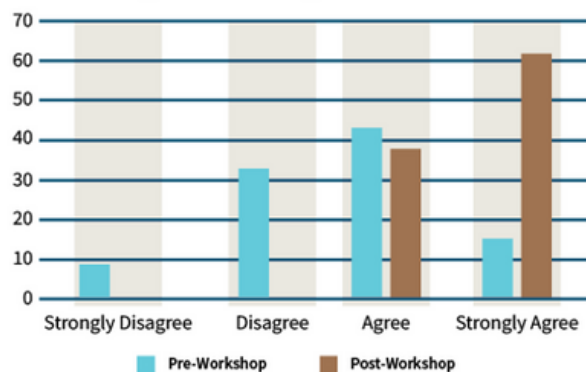
# CLC safeTALK Workshop Data

## -Participant Demographics-

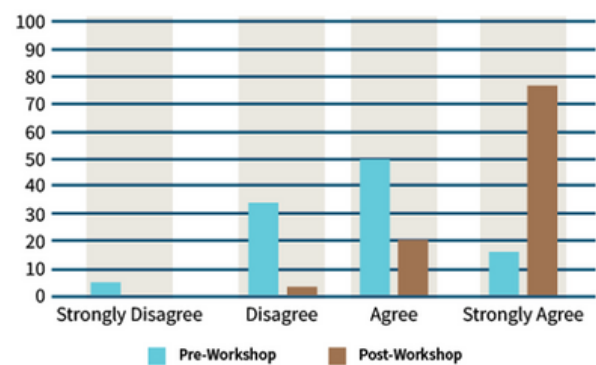
Gender	Percentage
Male	40%
Female	57%
Self-Described	0%
Prefer not to say	3%
Did not Answer	0%
Total	100%
Education	Percentage
HS Student	79%
HS Graduate	0%
College Student	1%
College Graduate	20%
Total	100%

## -Participant Responses from Pre-Workshop and Post Workshop Surveys-

I believe I could recognize the signs that someone might be thinking about suicide

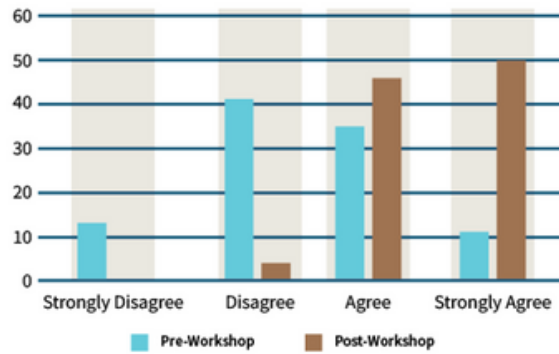


I know how and where to get help for someone who may be thinking about suicide

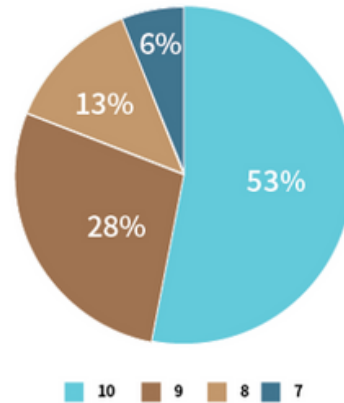


\*Data is based off a sample of 120 CLC safeTALK participants

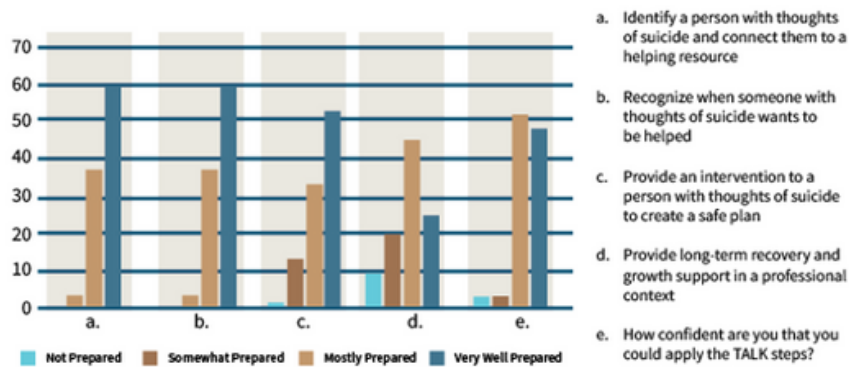
I feel confident in my ability to help someone who may be thinking about suicide



On a scale of 1 (very bad) to 10 (very good), how would you rate this training?



How prepared do you feel to use the following suicide prevention skills?



# Future Plans & Sustainability

The Mental Health Ministry is committed to continually growing the CLC initiative, provided we continue to garner necessary funding. We have scheduled the training retreat dates for Cohort 3, which will occur at ABRC on the following dates:

- October 2nd – 4th, 2023
- October 16th – 18th, 2023

Given that most CLC students from Cohort 1 will be graduating this fall, we anticipate filling Cohort 3 with students from Archbishop Murphy and Pope John Paul II to repopulate their CLC ranks. We plan to add 8 more students and up to 8 more adult intervention specialists. We also wish to note that graduating CLC students will remain certified safeTALK facilitators with LivingWorks and can offer trainings on their own as college students.



*A CLC student practices facilitating a safeTALK*

CLC remains open to adding more Catholic high schools to the program, however we have discovered that schools who have already invested in UW's Forefront model are not expressing interest in doing so. We will leave the door open anyway, believing that the CLC would effectively augment their efforts as opposed to replacing them.



Meanwhile, the Pastoral Care & Outreach department along with David Pina, CLC co-founder, and Mandy Armstrong from LivingWorks, have been collectively dreaming about possible ways that CLC can expand into new territories, namely our local prisons.

A vision has developed to replicate the CLC model in prisons, creating training retreats on the inside and certifying prison residents to be safeTALK facilitators for *their* peers in prison, turning the correctional environment into a suicide-safer community. Our [Criminal Justice Ministry](#) is currently exploring this possibility with our D.O.C. chaplains. Goodness is flowing. Thy Kingdom come. Please stay tuned...



# Fulcrum Donation Balance Sheet

Deposits	Notes	Withdrawals	Notes	Balance
\$20,000.00	Fulcrum Grant(Apr22)		Starting balance	\$20,000.00
		-\$5,511.75	Nov 14-16 CLC Training Accomodations @ ABRC	\$14,488.25
		-\$1,200.00	Nov 15-16 CLC ASIST Training 16 participants at \$120/ea	\$13,288.25
		-\$3,816.70	Nov 28-30 CLC Training Accomodations @ ABRC	\$9,471.55
		-\$9,500.00	Nov 29-30 CLC safeTALK Training 10 participants at \$950/ea	-\$28.45
		-\$4,645.23	Apr22 - Mar23 safeTALK Participant Workbooks	-\$4,673.68

CLC Expense Report		
Date	Description	Amount
11/12/22	CLC Retreat Supplies	\$316.28
11/14/22	CLC Cohort 2 Dinner	\$41.69
11/16/22	November 14-16 CLC Training Accomodations @ ABRC	\$5,511.75
11/16/22	November 15-16 CLC ASIST Training 16 participants at \$120/ea	\$1,200.00
11/28/22	CLC Cohort 2 Dinner	\$64.89
11/30/22	November 28-30 CLC Training Accomodations @ ABRC	\$3,816.70
11/30/22	November 29-30 CLC safeTALK Training 10 participants @ \$950/ea	\$9,500.00
Apr22 - Mar23	safeTALK Participant Workbooks	\$4,645.23
<b>Total</b>		<b>\$25,096.54</b>

The Mental Health Ministry will continue to promote safeTALK workshops to schools and parishes, inviting them to host our CLC facilitators and increase suicide awareness and responsiveness on their campuses. A sample flyer is as follows:



**safeTALK: A Suicide Prevention Workshop**

**Saturday, February 4 | 9am – 1pm**  
O'Dea High School  
802 Terry Ave, Seattle, WA

**Please join us for safeTALK**, a suicide intervention workshop facilitated by the Archdiocese of Seattle's Catholic Lifesaver Corps.

**How safeTALK works**  
Most people with thoughts of suicide don't want to die — instead, they are looking for a way to work through the pain in their lives. Through their words and actions, they usually invite others to help them in making a choice for life.

**Who can attend?**  
9th-12th grade students, parents, faculty, and staff.

**Goals and objectives**  
This four-hour suicide intervention training helps participants recognize a person with thoughts of suicide and connects them with resources to help them choose to live. Participants don't need any formal preparation to attend the training—anyone who wants to make a difference can learn the safeTALK steps. There will be scheduled breaks and opportunities to practice the skills built in the workshop, including practice on how to talk about this subject with others.

For more information, please contact Mr. Erik Michels at [emichels@odea.org](mailto:emichels@odea.org)

Scan QR code to register

**LIVINGWORKS**  
safeTALK

Archdiocese of Seattle | Mental Health Ministry

*The Mental Health Ministry would like to express our deepest thanks to the Fulcrum Foundation for believing in this initiative and supporting it so generously. Together, we will create suicide-safer communities and build the Kingdom of God.*