

<u>Measure Name</u>	Social atmosphere in stations
<u>Definition</u>	Improve the social atmosphere at stations to encourage positive social interactions through activities that foster a sense of community and support.
<u>Tags</u>	
<i>Incident Type</i>	Both trespass and suicide
<i>Location</i>	Station only
<i>Intervention Strategy</i>	Education: outreach and messaging
<i>Measure Group</i>	Collaboration, training, and education

Description

This measure focuses on improving the social atmosphere at stations to encourage positive social interactions and promote a sense of well-being through various activities and visual art. Lighting, color, and sound can also be used to foster a calming social environment that benefits community members in the rail environment [1].

Research has shown that a sense of connectedness and community may decrease risk for suicide [2], and that community art and activities can have a positive impact on mental health [3][4] and attitudes toward mental health issues [5]. The importance of community is also reflected in suicide prevention recommendations from the World Health Organization (WHO) [6] and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) [2].

Train stations are a crucial part of many U.S. communities and have the potential to positively impact mental health and well-being through social interaction, activities, and artistic expression [7]. Examples of initiatives to incorporate art into stations include:

- Arts in Transit program, St. Louis, MO.
- Chicago Transit Authority public art, Chicago, IL.
- Dallas Area Rapid Transit Art Program, Dallas, TX.
- Metro Art, Los Angeles, CA.
- Metropolitan Transportation Authority Arts and Design, New York, NY.

Several rail carriers outside of the United States have implemented strategies that involve creating a positive social atmosphere at stations. For example, ProRail in the Netherlands offered coffee to passengers while they waited for their trains—one for themselves and one to give to someone else. The purpose of this was to encourage people to interact, creating a “social safety net” for vulnerable individuals [3]. In Australia, rail carriers and social organizations offered activities at stations, including morning teas, barbecues, therapy dogs, free massages, and team building exercises for rail employees [3]. An evaluation of this effort found that community members who noticed the activities had a more positive impression of the station and had an increased understanding of individuals with mental health issues. Community members also reported that they were more likely to reach out to someone whose mental health may be at risk [8].

The social atmosphere at stations fosters a sense of community and may also interrupt suicidal thoughts of vulnerable individuals. In addition, a sense of community may encourage people to engage with one another in positive ways, even in the absence of special activities at stations.

Additional search terms: *community, environment, events, outreach*

Advantages

- Research supports the use of art to improve mental health and well-being [3][4].
 - Messages in stations about mental health awareness can have a positive impact those who encounter them. People reported having a better understanding of individuals with mental health issues and more positive attitudes toward those with mental health issues. They also reported an increased likelihood to reach out to someone at risk [5].
 - The cost of this measure varies based on the activities chosen and has the potential to be implemented at a low cost.
 - The social atmosphere at stations may positively impact staff, passengers and individuals who are or may become suicidal.
 - In-house rail staff and volunteers can be involved to further add to a sense of community.
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Drawbacks

- This measure relies on the willingness of individuals to participate in planned activities to create the desired atmosphere and associated benefits.
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Notable Practices

- It is important to identify potential stations and assess the locations—including infrastructure and the surrounding areas—to hold community activities [8].
 - Coordinate with the local community to identify the appropriate activity types for the local population [8]. For example, free coffee or food, music, art, gardens, games, or therapy animals may appeal more at different times of the day or season.
 - Develop a plan and proposed timeline to share with stakeholders and communicate to station staff and volunteers [8].
 - Publicize planned activities in the local area and share images from each activity on social media to promote activities at stations, increase participation, and increase mental health awareness [8].
 - Evaluate the effectiveness of the activities, for example by surveying commuters about whether the activities improved their views about the stations, positively changed their attitudes about individuals with mental health issues, or strengthened their sense of emotional wellbeing [5].
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References

[1] Ross, A., Reavley, N., Too, T., and Pirkis, J. (2017). *Interventions for the Community Stations Project: Evaluation Findings*.

Document Excerpt: The interventions caused community members to view their stations more positively. The findings of this evaluation show that mental health awareness ‘special events’ at train stations were effective at increasing people’s awareness of poor mental health and increasing their likelihood of helping someone who may be at risk of poor mental health. Continuing to focus efforts on mental health awareness activities may further strengthen the impact of the *Community Stations Project* interventions.

[2] Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2017). [Preventing Suicide: A Technical Package of Policy, Programs, and Practices](#).

Document Excerpt: This technical package represents a select group of strategies based on the best available evidence to help communities and states sharpen their focus on prevention activities with the greatest potential to prevent suicide. These strategies include: strengthening economic supports; strengthening access and delivery of suicide care; creating protective environments; promoting connectedness; teaching coping and problem-solving skills; identifying and supporting people at risk; and lessening harms and preventing future risk. The strategies represented in this package include those with a focus on preventing the risk of suicide in the first place as well as approaches to lessen the immediate and long-term harms of suicidal behavior for individuals, families, communities, and society. The strategies in the technical package support the goals and objectives of the National Strategy for Suicide Prevention and the National Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention’s priority to strengthen community-based prevention. Commitment, cooperation, and leadership from numerous sectors, including public health, education, justice, health care, social services, business, labor, and government can bring about the successful implementation of this package.

[3] Jones, M., Kimberlee, R., Deave, T., & Evans, S. (2013). [The role of community centre-based arts, leisure and social activities in promoting adult well-being and healthy lifestyles](#). *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 10(5), 1948-1962.

Abstract: Developed countries are experiencing high levels of mental and physical illness associated with long term health conditions, unhealthy lifestyles and an ageing population. Given the limited capacity of the formal health care sector to address these public health issues, attention is turning to the role of agencies active in civil society. This paper sought to evaluate the associations between participation in community centre activities, the psycho-social wellbeing and health related behaviours. This was based on an evaluation of the South West Well-being programme involving ten organisations delivering leisure, exercise, cooking, befriending, arts and crafts activities. The evaluation consisted of a before-and-after study with 687 adults. The results showed positive changes in self-reported general health, mental health, personal and social well-being. Positive changes were associated with diet and physical activity. Some activities were different in their outcomes—especially in cases where group activities were combined with one-to-one support. The results suggest that community centre activities of this nature offer benefits that are generically supportive of health behaviour changes. Such initiatives can perform an important role in supporting the health improvement objectives of formal health care services. For commissioners and partner agencies, accessibility and participation are attractive features that are particularly pertinent to the current public health context.

[4] Network Rail. (2015). [Station Design Principles for Network Rail](#).

Document Excerpt: Suicides are a societal issue which Network Rail considers necessary to address in terms of its own business; due to the impact it has on performance and the costs associated with running

the network. More recently Network Rail recognises the part it has to play in society and the role that suicide prevention has in achieving a sustainable business.

Network Rail is working with third parties such as mental health specialists and the Samaritans in the community to conduct outreach work with the aim of reducing the incidence of vulnerable individuals taking their lives. Analytical data has been collated and interpreted to inform physical mitigations which have been used as exemplars on some routes. The creation of a calm environment and the avoidance of over-stimulation are recognised as desirable in this respect.

[5] TrackSAFE. (2016). [Community Stations Toolkit](#).

Document Excerpt: From BBQs, coffee carts, ice cream vans, mobile libraries, health promotions, cultural events, activities with artists, live music and more, Community Stations revitalize the concept of train stations as community hubs. Train stations, because of their location and function, provide a central point for people to come together to participate in community life, learn, and celebrate. Community Stations provides an opportunity to host events and support local charities, civil organisations, and volunteer groups to make the station and community a better place. In doing so, the initiative plays a suicide prevention role in making stations less attractive for those wanting to undertake self-harm or suicide.

[6] Global Railway Alliance for Suicide Prevention. (2019). [Meeting Notes, November 2019](#).

Description: This document includes notes on rail suicide prevention efforts from GRASP group members.

[7] Chu, C., Buchman-Schmitt, J. M., Stanley, I. H., Hom, M. A., Tucker, R. P., Hagan, C. R., ... & Michaels, M. S. (2017). [The interpersonal theory of suicide: A systematic review and meta-analysis of a decade of cross-national research](#). *Psychological bulletin*, 143(12), 1313.

Abstract: Over the past decade, the interpersonal theory of suicide has contributed to substantial advances in the scientific and clinical understanding of suicide and related conditions. The interpersonal theory of suicide posits that suicidal desire emerges when individuals experience intractable feelings of perceived burdensomeness and thwarted belongingness and that near-lethal or lethal suicidal behavior occurs in the presence of suicidal desire and capability for suicide. A growing number of studies have tested these posited pathways in various samples; however, these findings have yet to be evaluated meta-analytically. This paper aimed to: (1) conduct a systematic review of the unpublished and published, peer-reviewed literature examining the relationship between interpersonal theory constructs and suicidal thoughts and behaviors; (2) conduct meta-analyses testing the interpersonal theory hypotheses; and (3) evaluate the influence of various moderators on these relationships. Four electronic bibliographic databases were searched through the end of March 2016: PubMed, Medline, PsycINFO, and Web of Science. Hypothesis-driven meta-analyses using random effects models were conducted using 122 distinct published and unpublished samples. Findings supported the interpersonal theory: the interaction between thwarted belongingness and perceived burdensomeness was significantly associated with suicidal ideation; and the interaction between thwarted belongingness, perceived burdensomeness, and capability for suicide was significantly related to a greater number of prior suicide attempts. However, effect sizes for these interactions were modest. Alternative configurations of theory variables were similarly useful for predicting suicide risk as theory-consistent pathways. We conclude with limitations and recommendations for the interpersonal theory as a framework for understanding the suicidal spectrum.

[8] World Health Organization. (2014). [Preventing suicide: A global imperative](#).

Document excerpt: Despite the evidence that many deaths are preventable, often with low-cost interventions, suicide is too often a low 12 priority for governments and policy-makers worldwide. The objective of this report is to prioritize suicide prevention on the global public health and public policy

agendas and to increase overall awareness of suicide as a legitimate public health issue. Through this report, WHO presents evidence-based interventions for reducing suicides and calls on partners to increase their prevention efforts.

[9] Siegel, I. (2018, June 12). [Art in transit systems may improve commuters' mental health](#).

Description: This article from the Mobility Lab in Arlington, Virginia provides an overview of how interaction with and observation of art can support the mental health of commuters in train stations.

Additional Resources

McLeod, J., Meade, J., & Pryor, S. (2004). [Health in public spaces: Promoting mental health and wellbeing through the Arts and Environment Scheme](#). VicHealth.

Document excerpt: Public space can appeal to the senses through sight, touch and sound. Through creative activity, a new vision can be brought to an area so that we see it in a new light. It changes our view of the space but it also changes the way we see ourselves within it. Through design and art, a public space can be filled with meaning. It can be endowed with a sense of occasion so that it is a place of significance for the people who use it. Thus, well-designed public space can make a positive contribution to the mental health and wellbeing of a community.

Public space planning is often a task performed by local government for the local community. The Arts and Environment Scheme sees our planning scheme as a joint venture. With is the operative word. Each of the eight councils funded through the scheme worked with members of their community to design public spaces that are engaging, inclusive and aesthetically arresting. For these councils, public spaces are no longer simply about recreation, a conduit for traffic or a generalised amenity. Public spaces are about enhancing the mental health and wellbeing of the community. [...]

In 1999, the Victorian Health Promotion Foundation (VicHealth) developed its Mental Health Promotion Plan 1999–2002 (MHPP).

The Arts and Environment Scheme was one component of a comprehensive range of initiatives that is designed to implement the MHPP between 2000 and 2003. This report is the evaluation of the scheme's first phase.

Stuckey, H. L., & Nobel, J. (2010). [The connection between art, healing, and public health: A review of current literature](#). *American Journal of Public Health*, 100(2), 254-263

Abstract: This review explores the relationship between engagement with the creative arts and health outcomes, specifically the health effects of music engagement, visual arts therapy, movement-based creative expression, and expressive writing. Although there is evidence that art-based interventions are effective in reducing adverse physiological and psychological outcomes, the extent to which these interventions enhance health status is largely unknown. Our hope is to establish a foundation for continued investigation into this subject and to generate further interest in researching the complexities of engagement with the arts and health.

[TrackSAFE Community Stations website](#)

Description: This website provides additional information about TrackSAFE's Community Stations initiative.

Village Well. (2006). [Train stations as places for community wellbeing](#). Melbourne, Australia: Village Well.

Document Excerpt: In 2002 VicHealth developed focus on enhancement of the built environment in order to promote health and wellbeing. Some of this work involved utilization of the arts medium to create public spaces which enhanced social connection and inclusion, a fundamental determinant of mental health. A range of local governments were resourced to undertake “place making” activity with some of this work being connected to public transport facilities. The learnings resulting from this activity were documented in “Health in public spaces: Promoting mental Health and Wellbeing through the Art and Environment Scheme”. (VicHealth 2004) and have stimulated on-going VicHealth interest in this area. Consequently, in 2006 VicHealth commissioned development of a scoping paper focusing on existing arts practice designed to develop railway stations as community hubs. This document is a result of the scoping exercise undertaken.

Related Measures

- Identify funding opportunities
- Incident cost estimation
- Station design considerations
- Passenger engagement to identify customers at risk