

LOST & FOUND[®]

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IMPACT REPORT

2024 WAS A YEAR OF UPS AND DOWNS FOR LOST&FOUND.

Many of the plans we'd made in January had to be adjusted midyear to account for new, sometimes difficult realities.

Thankfully, at Lost&Found, we know a lot about resilience.

This past year, resilience was not only at the heart of the messages we shared and the trainings we offered, but also at center of our response to changing conditions.

And so our work continued: Hundreds of young adults benefitted from their connections to Lost&Found's student programs. Data that will help to improve LGBTQ+ health—both mental and physical—was gathered in a research project that is breaking ground nationwide. Families that have lost loved ones to suicide received support. And more than 1,000 individuals received mental health training that will help them respond when they encounter someone in mental distress or suicidal crisis.

This Impact Report highlights some of this work from 2024. Note that it also marks a transition for us: Going forward, we will produce annual reports (with financial information) that align with our fiscal year, July-June. Watch for that later this year.

The generosity of our donors is essential to doing this work. Thanks to all of you who supported Lost&Found in 2024!

SUPPORTING YOU:

Boundaries, Self-Care,
and Coping Skills

LOST & FOUND

Haven Kulesa is one of the Lost&Found staff members who offers mental health trainings to students.

L&F increases mental health trainings to meet demand

When demand for mental health trainings from interested organizations and individuals increased in 2024, Lost&Found stepped up to respond.

The trainings offered by Lost&Found in 2024 included Question, Persuade, Refer (QPR), Mental Health First Aid (MHFA), and EveryDay Strong. Trainings were offered in multiple settings, including college and universities, K-12 school systems, private businesses, and community organizations. We were able to build the education department by offering more trainings than in previous years. This is in part due to the support of state funding, but also demonstrates the increased desire for mental health

education within the community. This education is so important, as the lack of mental health literacy is one of the greatest barriers to seeking help.

The impact of these training can be measured in a few ways. First, greater than 90% of QPR and MHFA attendees felt more prepared to assist someone in crisis after attending training. We can also see the impact from the comments shared on training evaluations. As shown in the samples at right, these comments reflect the effectiveness of our training staff as well as the importance and impact of the training content.

Overall, suicide prevention training is alive and growing at Lost&Found. We look forward to continued growth in 2025!

Quotes from attendees:

- "I appreciated the kindness and knowledge of the instructor. She addressed a difficult topic with compassion."
- "The instructor had wonderful passion."
- "I didn't realize what a sensitive topic it was for me, but I felt like it was a safe space."
- "The best part of the training was learning it is okay to directly ask someone if they are thinking about suicide."
- "Discussing real world scenarios was very helpful."
- "Every parent/grandparent should take QPR training."
- "The educators were very knowledgeable, and the information was awesome. They allowed us to share if comfortable."
- "The format was very engaging and inclusive."

59
Number of training sessions held

1063
Number of people reached

90%+
QPR and MHFA attendees who felt more prepared to assist someone in crisis

Numbers are from March through December 2024

Students find and give support through mentorship

In 2024, 220 students participated in Lost&Found's Peer Mentorship program, which is found on eleven college campuses across South Dakota and Minnesota. The Peer2Peer Mentorship Program connects students with trained peer mentors for one-on-one conversations focused on goal setting, discussing challenges, and offering support. This program offers development opportunities that will enhance mentors' leadership skills and have an invaluable impact on their peers. In 2024, Lost&Found trained nearly 130 student mentors.

SDSU student Riley Buckneberg has a unique perspective on the program, as she has been on both sides of the mentor-mentee relationship. She shared her story as part of Lost&Found's Stories of Resilience project last fall. Here is a summary of her story; read the full story at stories.resilienttoday.org.

At the beginning of the 2023 fall semester, I had hit my lowest point in my mental health journey. I felt like I had no purpose in life. I had just spent my 20th birthday in the middle of a first-trimester miscarriage. My GPA started slipping, and the mess in my apartment piled up by the day. Life didn't stop; I couldn't give up because I still had responsibilities, so I ignored



it. I thought at some point I would just push through it. I treated my mental health issues like an annoying younger sibling and planned to ignore them until they went away.

After a couple of months of thinking I would just snap out of it, I realized that much like a little sibling, it doesn't just go away. I decided to reach out to my campus counseling office to talk through the thoughts trapped in my head. That 30-minute meeting was the first step in my journey. At my first visit, it was concluded that I needed to find purpose outside of my classes and home. In the hours following my session with the counselor, I reached

out to the Lost&Found program to become a mentor and help anyone struggling like me. Once I became a mentor, I was more satisfied with life. I thought I had finally figured it out.

After about 2 months of mentoring, I realized I wasn't doing as good as I thought. I felt successful and satisfied, but those feelings were draining. I was finally back to being the student I prided myself on being, I loved my job, I had my zest for life back but only when I was in public. How could I be so selfish to reach out for help? On paper, I felt like I didn't deserve support, that I for some reason, I didn't qualify. One day I reached out to the Lost&Found program to see if I could get a mentor, and I was paired up with someone within the week. In the following weeks, I learned that reaching out for support didn't make me less than, in fact it gave me the support I needed to be the best mentor I could be. I still meet with both my mentor and my mentee and I truly don't know where I would be without either of them.

It is easy to say "I don't need it that much, I will be just fine," but everyone deserves and needs proper support. Behind every smile, every pair of eye bags, every pimple and dimple, everybody is just trying to get through the day. Everybody has something, and no experience is more or less deserving of support than another.

11 Campuses with Peer2Peer Mentorship programs

220 Peer2Peer Mentorship participants

11 Campuses with L&F student chapters

Students lead L&F chapters

Lost&Found has eleven campus chapters across South Dakota and Minnesota. Campus chapters are student-led organizations that focus on creating safe spaces on their campus for students to connect, learn, and develop skills based in mental wellness. During the month of September, Suicide Prevention Month, each Lost&Found campus chapter hosted a "Chalk the Walk" event in which students wrote messages of hope and positivity on their campus sidewalks to encourage and inspire their peers.



Inclusive Care Collaborative leads the way to improve queer health care experiences

South Dakota lacks essential data on the experiences of queer individuals living in the state.

The absence of state-level data is evident in national surveys like the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) and the Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System (YRBSS), as South Dakota has opted out of collecting information on sexual orientation and gender identity. This lack of data leaves a significant gap in understanding the health behaviors and risks affecting queer people, making it difficult to implement effective system-level programming. While The Trevor Project has conducted important research on queer youth aged 13-24 in South Dakota, data for other age groups remains limited. In this project, we use "queer" as an inclusive term for all sexual orientations and gender identities. Although the term has a history as a slur, it was chosen based on community preferences during talk-back sessions.

To address this gap, Lost&Found has partnered with The Transformation Project to launch the Inclusive Care Collaborative (ICC). This groundbreaking research and storytelling initiative, led by Senior Research & Evaluation Specialist Cody Ingle and Inclusive Collaborative Care Coordinator Jack Fonder,



Cody Ingle, right, is a Bloomberg American Health Fellow. His work on the ICC was recognized at the Bloomberg Public Health Summit in December. Gesine Ziebarth, next to Cody, also attended the summit.

will establish baseline data on the experiences of queer individuals in South Dakota, particularly in accessing medical and mental health care.

The ICC has developed five surveys for the following populations: Queer Adults (18+), Queer Youth (10-17), Caregivers to Queer Youth, Medical Providers, and Mental Health Providers. Over the past year, the focus has been on the Queer Adult survey, which has collected 454 responses from individuals across 30 counties so far, forming a foundational dataset for advocacy and service planning.

Beyond data collection, the ICC is dedicated to improving the overall health and mental health experiences of queer individuals in South Dakota. The project emphasizes equipping medical and mental health providers with the tools and knowledge necessary to deliver affirming, inclusive care. Educational materials are being developed to support this mission, alongside collaborative relationships with providers statewide.

As the first initiative of its kind in South Dakota, the ICC strives to

Quotes from ICC's adult survey:

- "There needs to be better access to safe and accepting care for queer people in more than just Sioux Falls or Rapid City."
- "I put off finding a primary care doctor and thus also regular checkups for years because I wasn't sure how to find a queer-friendly one."
- "The community is worth it, the queer people and those who love us are worth it, and we are not going anywhere."
- "We just want to be able to live our life without constantly having to fight for basic human rights."
- "Trans youth too often find themselves seeing suicide as their only option to address their pain."

ensure queer individuals receive affirming care, regardless of location, making a significant impact on their lives.

4

Number of current external evaluation partners

\$202,666

Amount generated through evaluation contracts

7

Number of S.D. campuses that have completed a Campus Resilience Index



Program supports families after tragedy of suicide

Lost&Found’s Survivors Joining for Hope (SJ4H) program started serving families who had lost a loved one to suicide in 2022, when the standalone nonprofit organization became a program of Lost&Found. During the two and a half years since then, SJ4H has provided resources and financial support to 38 families.

Charity, who lost her brother to suicide in 2022, is one of the people who has been helped by the program. Her story was featured in a video produced by the Sioux Empire United Way, which has provided the funding that Lost&Found needs to help SJ4H recipients in the Sioux Falls area.

“When (my brother’s suicide) happened, there were a lot of emotions that you go through,” Charity said in the video. “You’re trying to navigate all your feelings and also try to figure out how you can put your brother to rest—like, you have to



SURVIVORS JOINING FOR HOPE

keep moving forward, and you have to pay for this stuff somehow.”

Charity filled out the application to receive support from SJ4H, and within hours heard from Lost&Found’s Dakota Jordan, who was managing the program at the time.

“Somehow mental health and suicide is kind of taboo, so some people don’t want to ask for help because they don’t think they should, but I strongly recommend it,” Charity said. “If I could tell the world or everybody about Lost&Found—just the resources, the people—it was a big relief, and I would strongly recommend them. It felt really good to know that there was somebody there that understood what we were going through and be able to help us and

point us in the right direction.”

Jordan explained that the program helps people who have been left with extra expenses such as funerals and legal fees as a result of the suicide. “We see people get relief from that financial burden,” she said. “We see them move forward in their lives. We see them be successful. And you can’t do that without support.”

Lost&Found continues to provide financial support for survivors of suicide loss in the Sioux Falls area through the generosity of the Sioux Empire United Way and their donors. Lost&Found is seeking funding from other sources to be able to provide these services in other areas of the state, including in and around Rapid City, where the need is great.

If you are interested in designating funds for the SJ4H program, you can do so at <https://resilienttoday.networkforgood.com/>.

180

Number of suicide deaths in SD in 2023

28

Applications received by SJ4H in 2024; 21 received funding support

\$52,500

Approximate total amount awarded to SJ4H families in 2024

We deeply appreciate the more than 300 generous donors and organizations who supported Lost&Found in 2024.

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