



Interactive Screening Program

Setting
Higher Education

Type of Program
Screening

NSSP Goals Addressed
4.3, 8.3

Program Description

The American Foundation for Suicide Prevention's (AFSP) *Interactive Screening Program* (ISP) provides a mechanism to identify and treat college students who are at risk for depression, suicide, and related problems. The *ISP*, through the authority of the appropriate college office, sends an email to students inviting them to participate in a confidential stress and depression test. Students follow the link provided, log on to the program website using a unique user ID and password, and complete the 34-question Stress and Depression Screening Questionnaire. Based on their scores, students are classified according to risk (elevated depression score and suicide risk, elevated depression score, mid-range depression score, low depression score). Within 24 hours, the program counselor provides the student with an assessment of his or her score and, if warranted, suggestions for seeking help. If a student is reluctant to seek direct help, he or she may address concerns in anonymous online dialogues with the program counselor.

The *ISP* began in 2002 as a way to identify college students who were at risk for depression and suicide, but were reluctant to seek help. The program was first tested at two schools: a private university in the southeastern U.S. with an undergraduate population of approximately 6,000 students; and the main campus of a large state university, also in the southeastern U.S., with about 17,000 undergraduates. Studies of the *ISP* have been published in the *Journal of American College Health* and *Depression and Anxiety* (reprints available upon request).

Program Objectives

When implemented in a college setting, the *ISP* should:

1. Identify students who are depressed and/or at risk for suicide.
2. Engage these students in a supportive and meaningful way.
3. Refer students to an appropriate mental health care provider for evaluation and possible treatment.

Implementation Essentials

- The program counselor should be comfortable interacting with those at risk for depression and suicide, and able to use the basic technology (email, web forms) inherent with *ISP*.
- School or community-based mental health professionals need to be available for referrals from the program counselor.

Contact Information

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Costs

AFSP developed and maintains the technology required for the *ISP*. AFSP leases the use of this technology to colleges for a yearly cost of \$3,000 (a two-year commitment is required). Costs vary and funding help may be available. Contact Ann Haas for details.

The college also must provide a program counselor, counseling office, and associated telecommunications. It is estimated that a .5 FTE program counselor is needed for every 12,000 students.

*The content of practices listed in Section III (Adherence to Standards) of the SPRC/AFSP Best Practices Registry address specific goals of the *National Strategy for Suicide Prevention* and have been reviewed by a panel of three suicide prevention experts and found to meet standards of accuracy, safety, and programmatic guidelines. Practices were not reviewed for evidence of effectiveness. Additional information about the Best Practices Registry can be found at www.sprc.org.

The Best Practices Registry is supported by a grant (1 U79 SM57392-04) from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS). No official endorsement by SAMHSA or DHHS for the information in this document is intended or should be inferred.