



Student Support Network

Setting
Colleges & Universities

Type of Program
Education & Training

NSSP Goals Addressed
6.5

Program Description

Developed by Worcester Polytechnic Institute Counseling Center, the *Student Support Network (SSN)* program trains selected students to identify, support, and refer peers who may be struggling with significant mental and behavioral health concerns. Core training components include:

- Knowledge of mental/behavioral health issues and campus/community resources
- Intervention skills, including empathic responding and working with resistance
- Connecting identified students with a wide range of student helpers
- Promoting attitudes which de-stigmatize mental health help-seeking

Students are actively recruited to participate in the SSN program based on their high level of involvement/leadership on campus and their desire to help others. Participating students learn how to recognize signs of mental health distress in key areas (e.g. depression, anxiety, suicidal ideation, and substance abuse). Students also learn and practice important supportive skills (empathic responding). Additionally, students learn how, when, and where to make referrals to local campus and community resources. The SSN program, which allows for multiple six-week trainings, gives local mental health staff the opportunity to form connections with a significant number of individuals within the existing peer support network on campus.

Program Objectives

At the end of the training, SSN-trained students will have:

1. Increased ability to recognize signs of significant mental/behavioral health distress in others.
2. Increased confidence and greater ability to engage others in distress in an effective and supportive manner.
3. Increased knowledge and skill in referring others in distress to appropriate campus/community resources.

Implementation Essentials

- SSN trainers should have a good knowledge of campus and community resources that they can impart to trainees.

Contact Information

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Costs

The SSN training manual is available free of charge from the WPI Counseling Center. For a copy, e-mail sdcc@wpi.edu

One- to two-day “train the trainers” consultation is available for \$1,000 to \$3,000, plus travel. Contact Charles Morse for more information.

*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 SM57392-05) 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.