SOS Signs of Suicide Middle School and High School Prevention Programs

Date: 2016 (For resources, this is the publication date. For programs, this is the date posted.)

Information

Type: Program/Practice, Education/Training Program, Program with Evidence of Effectiveness
Organization: MindWise Innovations (formerly Screening for Mental Health)
Costs: Visit the program website [1] for training options and costs. Also see the archived NREPP listing [2].

Contact

Visit the program website [1].

The SOS Signs of Suicide Prevention Program (SOS) is a universal, school-based depression awareness and suicide prevention program designed for middle-school (ages 11–13) or high-school (ages 13–17) students. The goals are to 1) decrease suicide and suicide attempts by increasing student knowledge and adaptive attitudes about depression, 2) encourage personal help-seeking and/or help-seeking on behalf of a friend, 3) reduce the stigma of mental illness and acknowledge the importance of seeking help or treatment, 4) engage parents and school staff as partners in prevention through “gatekeeper” education, and 5) encourage schools to develop community-based partnerships to support student mental health.

Both the middle and high school programs provide age-appropriate, educational DVDs for school staff to play for students. The middle school video (Time to ACT) and the high school video (Friends for Life) inform students how to ACT® (Acknowledge, Care and Tell), demonstrate the right and wrong ways to help, and show a student talking with a school counselor. The program includes an optional student screening that assesses for depression and suicide risk and identifies students to refer for professional help as indicated. The program also includes a video, Training Trusted Adults, to engage staff, parents, or community members in the program’s objectives and prevention efforts. The program kit is available from MindWise Innovations (formerly Screening for Mental Health, Inc.) for a fee. Although training is not required to implement the SOS Program, many schools/districts prefer a structured training to help increase awareness and ensure fidelity to the program. MindWise Innovations offers in-person and online trainings for schools and youth-serving organizations on how to implement SOS, as well as a 2-day train-the-trainer course, the SOS Certified Training Institute (CTI) to help state agencies, hospitals, regional coalitions, etc. build local capacity for implementing youth suicide prevention efforts. Learn more [3].

Designation as a "Program with Evidence of Effectiveness"

SPRC designated this intervention as a “program with evidence of effectiveness” based on its inclusion in SAMHSA’s National Registry of Evidence-Based Programs and Practices (NREPP).

Outcome(s) Reviewed (Evidence Rating)*
Suicidal Thoughts and Behaviors (Promising)
Knowledge, Attitudes, and Beliefs about Mental Health (Promising)
Receipt of Mental Health and/or Substance Use Treatment (Ineffective)
Social Competence Related to Help-Seeking (specifically, seeking help when feeling depressed or suicidal) (Ineffective)

Read more about this program's ratings [2].

* NREPP changed its review criteria in 2015. This program was reviewed under the post-2015 criteria. To help practitioners find programs that fit their needs, NREPP reviews the evidence for specific outcomes, not overall programs. Each outcome was assigned an evidence rating of Effective, Promising, or Ineffective. A single program may have multiple outcomes with different ratings. When considering programs, we recommend (a) assessing whether the specific outcomes achieved by the program are a fit for your needs; and (b) examining the strength of evidence for each outcome.

Implementation Essentials

- Those responsible for implementing the SOS Signs of Suicide should carefully review and adhere to the Planning Checklist found in the planning section of the Procedures Manual.
- A school-based crisis management plan, such as that found in the Maine Youth Suicide Prevention, Intervention, and Postvention Guidelines [4], should be created prior to implementing the SOS Signs of Suicide program.

2012 NSSP Objectives Addressed:

Objective 5.2: Encourage community-based settings to implement effective programs and provide education that promote wellness and prevent suicide and related behaviors.
Objective 7.1: Provide training on suicide prevention to community groups that have a role in the prevention of suicide and related behaviors.

Populations: Youth, Adolescents
Settings: Schools, Middle School, High School
Strategies: Identify and Assist, Increase Help-Seeking

Links within this resource

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