Suicidal Ideation and Behavior among Young Adults

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A recent study found that part-time college students, high school students, and young people ages 18 to 25 not enrolled in school were more likely to attempt suicide with a plan than full-time college students. The authors suggested that prevention efforts should target young people who do not attend college full-time, and should be carried out in high schools, workplaces, and the community.

The study used data from the National Survey on Drug Use and Health, which is sponsored by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. It found that students who attended college part-time had a higher risk for suicidal ideation without a suicide plan or attempt than their peers who were full-time college students. Young people not enrolled in high school or college were more at risk for attempting suicide without a plan than full-time college students.

The research also examined factors related to mental health treatment among young adults who had suicidal ideation with/without behavior (SIB). Findings included the following:

- Young adults with SIB who had college degrees were more likely to be treated for mental health conditions than young people with SIB who had not completed college.
- Females with SIB were more likely to receive mental health treatment than males with SIB.
- Non-Hispanic black, Asian, and Hispanic young adults with SIB were less likely to receive mental health treatment than non-Hispanic whites.
- Young adults with SIB who lacked health insurance were less likely to receive mental health treatment than insured young adults with SIB.

Close to 37 percent of young people with SIB reported a perceived unmet need for mental health treatment. Reasons for not receiving mental health treatment included cost, not knowing where to go, and a fear of being committed to a psychiatric institution.

More than 70 percent of young adults with SIB who were not in mental health treatment did not feel they had an unmet treatment need. The authors recommended that these young people are an important target group for suicide prevention efforts because low perceived need for treatment may be associated with a low prevalence of receiving treatment.

