Wayne State University

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Wayne State University (WSU) is proposing a suicide prevention project whose purpose is to eliminate deaths by suicide in the University community through the development of an infrastructure of education, training, and dissemination of information to all faculty, staff, students and their families. WSU plans to create an environment in which mental health issues are not stigmatized, seeking help is encouraged and seen as a strength, and members of the campus community step in to prevent harm to each other. This will be accomplished through the development of collaborative networks, innovative marketing campaigns, gatekeeper training programs, and culturally-appropriate educational programs. Although all members of the campus will be included, this project will work to provide targeted programs and outreach to students at particular risk including those who identify themselves as LGBTQ, military veterans, and those living in campus residence halls. Particular attention will be paid to students who are often marginalized including those who are minority students or have mental health disabilities.

WSU is a public university with an enrollment of over 27,000 students. It is located in Detroit, Michigan. The University is primarily a nonresidential campus with nearly 90% of students living off campus. WSU is the most ethnically diverse public university in the State of Michigan. The need for comprehensive suicide prevention efforts is clear from data derived from the University. At least six suicides have occurred in the last several years; however, accurate tracking has not been possible. Nevertheless, other data from student surveys indicate that our students are highly stressed, juggle many responsibilities, and many are not fully prepared academically. Those who seek services at Counseling & Psychological Services (CAPS) have higher symptom levels than are typical at the counseling centers of universities the size of WSU.

Five goals are designed to impact the campus as a whole by creating a permanent infrastructure change for prevention services as well as approximately 4000 persons directly over the 3 year project period. These goals are:

1) Create a networking infrastructure that links WSU with health care providers from the broader community and resources;
2) Develop a gatekeeper training program on suicide prevention and mental health issues for all members of the University community, including students, faculty and staff;
3) Develop and implement, both in person and online, culturally appropriate educational seminars to all members of the University community;
4) Develop a cohesive marketing strategy that is culturally appropriate and advertises the WSU network infrastructure (and resources), the gatekeeper training (Kognito modules and Mental Health First Aid), the education seminars, college and national suicide prevention hotlines and Crisis Text Line; and,
5) Develop culturally appropriate online and print educational resources for parents and families to supplement information received in person at orientation.