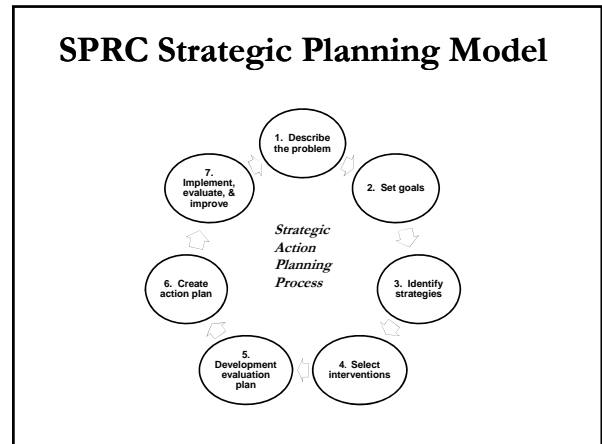


Identifying and Engaging Peer Support Networks on Campus
Promoting Student Safety and Well Being

SAMHSA/CMHS
 GLS Suicide Prevention Grantee
 Meeting

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Identifying Need Areas

- Annual suicide rate on College campuses
 - 7.5 per 100,000 students (Silverman et al, 1997)
- ACHA-NCHA Findings

In the last 12 months, have you:	Fall 2000	Fall 2004	Fall 2007
Felt very sad	80.7	78.2	76.4
Felt so depressed it was difficult to function	43.7	43.6	43.1
Seriously considered attempting suicide	11.0	10.8	10.2
Attempted Suicide	1.9	1.8	1.8
Have you ever:			
Been diagnosed with depression	10.1	13.7	16.0

National Data on Students Considering Suicide

- 55% of students had experienced suicidal thoughts in their lifetime
- 46% never talk to anyone else about thoughts or suicidal attempts
- Of those who talked to others, 67% first told a friend/peer
- Of those who talked to others, 52% found it helpful and 58% were advised to seek professional help

Duan et al, 2009
 National Research Consortium of Counseling Centers (June 2009 issue of *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice*)

Healthy Minds Study

- When students experience problems, 70% talk to their friends about it
- Personally-held vs. perceived stigmas in others regarding mental health and treatment
 - Perceived stigma is much more common
 - Personally-held stigma has a significant negative correlation with help-seeking, perceived stigma has no significant correlation
 - Personally-held stigmas correlate with being male, lower SES, Asian or Pacific Islander, younger, an international student, and/or having strong religious beliefs

(Eisenberg et al, 2009)

mtvU and Associated Press College Stress and Mental Health Poll (Spring 2009)

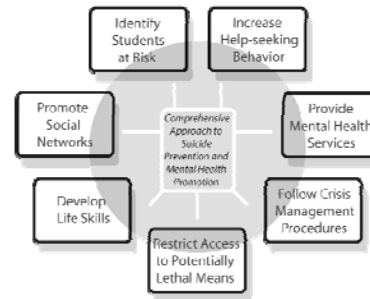
- Friends and family are most sought out
 - 77% would turn to friends for help
 - 67% would turn to parents for help
- Students are less inclined to seek professional help
 - 20% say they would turn to school counseling
 - 6% would turn to Resident Advisor
 - 3% would turn to a crisis hotline

WPI Specific Data

- 44% reported feeling so depressed over the past year that they have not been able to function (approximately 1702 students)
- 7.6% have seriously contemplated suicide over the past year (289 students)
- 1.7% have made a suicide attempt (65 students)

2004 WPI "The Health Survey"

The Jed Foundation/SPRC Comprehensive Approach to Suicide Prevention and Mental Health Promotion



Enhancing a Network of Support

- Who is responsible for the design and implementation of preventive mental health programming on campus?
- Who are the individuals and groups within campus communities who are most influential within a network of student support?

WPI Student Support Network (SSN)



- Identifying and selecting student participants
 - E-mail to faculty and staff
 - General advertising/programming
- Training SSN participants (6 week training)
 - Knowledge
 - Skills
 - Perspectives/Stigma reduction
 - Connection

SSN Knowledge Areas

- Mental Health Concerns
 - Depression
 - Anxiety
 - Self-harm
 - Suicide
 - Substance Abuse
- Orientation to Available Resources

SSN Skill Areas

- Providing support in the moment
 - Listening/empathy (the hammer)
 - Resist urges to fix
 - Acceptance
- Successfully connecting friends with help
 - Process orientation
 - Stages of change model
 - Working with resistance

SSN Perspectives

- De-stigmatizing view of mental health
 - Normalization of struggles
 - Functional vs. Diagnostic descriptions
 - “It’s not us and them...it’s us and us”
- Enhancing Connection
 - Networking within support system
 - Helping the helpers
 - Enhancing a community of support

Empowering and Supporting Student Initiatives

- Specialized training offered in key areas
- Supporting additional opportunities for student involvement
 - Programming
 - Marketing
- Feeds existing and new traditional Peer Ed
- Active Minds at WPI

Evaluating SSN Outcomes (based on 168 student participants)

- Pre/post SIRI II results indicate significantly better crisis responding skills
- Students demonstrated significant improvement in the following areas:
 - Recognizing warning signs for suicide
 - Making appropriate referrals for support
 - Convincing someone to get help
 - Discussing suicide with others
- Significantly Increased Student Outreach to the SDCC for consultation

Student Participant Perspectives

- “The series opened doors to talking about issues generally classified as taboo. The easy-going, relaxed atmosphere made it very comfortable to talk and learn.”
- “It was worthwhile because I got to know the SDCC staff and learn of the resources available for troubled students.”
- “I feel it helped me realize how to help others cope with their problems and also how to better cope with my own. Most importantly, I feel like I could actually help someone talk about and solve their issues.”
- “It was worthwhile because even if I don’t end up using this in college, it is something that I can use for the rest of my life.”

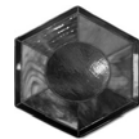
More Information on WPI Student Support Network

- SSN Training Manual has been submitted for review and listing on Suicide Prevention Resource Center (SPRC) Best Practices Registry
- Manual is available to campuses who are considering implementing a peer networking program
- SSN will continue to evolve with SAMHSA funding to include faculty/staff as well as specialized trainings for international and under-represented students

WPI Student Development and Counseling Center

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