Implementing Mental Health Screenings in Rural Southeast Iowa: Challenges or Opportunities?

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Great Prairie AEA Service Area
- 14 counties in southeast Iowa
- 40,000 Students
- 3,700 Teachers & Administrators
- 35 School Districts - 3,360 Square Miles
- District Size Range 67--4,582 students
- Agency merger during 2007-2008 year.
Youth Suicide Prevention Grant

- Two School Social Workers are part time TeenScreen Coordinators (1 day per week).
- Goal—Increasing Student Participation:
  A. Increase consent rates.
  B. Increase number of screening sites.
  C. Retrain existing sites (staff turnover).

Great Prairie AEA Screening History

- 2007-2008 Agency Merger (Great River & Southern Prairie)
- 2009-2010 Expansion to 16 active school district screening sites.

Screening & Referral Activities for 2008-09

- 933 Students offered Screening Opportunity
- 265 (28% of those offered screening) received parental consent and were screened
- 43 (16% of those screened) were referred for mental or non-mental health services
- 24 (56% of those referred) received a mental health referral
**PITFALLS TO AVOID**

✓ Technology, Technology, Technology.
Get to know the tech directors!
✓ Don’t fall for “Where’s the Beef?”
Be prepared with answers for questions.
✓ Don’t dwell on setbacks—stay focused!
✓ Leaving out teachers on the basics of the TeenScreen process.
✓ Did I mention Technology?

**MUST DO’S**
for Successful Screenings!

✓ Passion Factor—Who’s the Believers?
✓ Use Positive Student Feedback!
✓ Maximize School & Community Resources.
✓ Find that “Perfect” incentive! Tootsie Pops.
✓ BE PROACTIVE!!!
✓ Use the “Budweiser” Model. Not too __, Not too __, the difference is __.

Katherine’s Success Story
(real story)

• Living with relative, no legal guardian.
• Natural parent refused to sign consent.
• Katherine talked parent into signing for the mental health screening.
• Screen positive for depression and suicide ideation.
• School social worker tracked down natural parent in town 50 miles away.
• Obtained mental health counseling.
Challenges or Opportunities?

- Is your glass half full or empty?
- Active sites are promoting mental health!
- Expect a challenge and Never Give Up!
- Are mental health screenings necessary?

Quotes from participants....”Yes!”

- “Good mental health helps you learn.”
- “I like that my school cares about me and not just my grades.”
- “I thought it was helpful and feel relieved that I was able to get my problems out.”
- “Have everyone take it!”

Contact Information

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