Active Minds, Inc.
Suicide Prevention Grantees Orientation Meeting
College Resources Panel
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What is Active Minds?
A student-run mental health awareness, education, and advocacy organization on the college campus
Mental Illness and College Students

• NIMH estimates that 22.1% of all Americans 18+ suffer from a diagnosable mental disorder in any given year
  - Young adults aged 18-24 have the highest prevalence of diagnosable forms of mental illness at 27% (Herrman, 2001)
• Half of all adults with depression report onset before age 20
• 75% of people with schizophrenia experience onset between the ages of 15-25
• 22% of college students were sometimes so depressed they could not function, and almost 10% have seriously contemplated suicide (ACHA)

Mental Illness and College Students (cont.)

• More children and young adults die from suicide each year than from cancer, heart disease, AIDS, birth defects, stroke, and chronic lung disease combined
• Over 4,000 children and young adults take their lives each year, making suicide the 3rd leading cause of death among 18-24 year olds
  - 2nd leading cause of death for college students, killing over 1,100 students on campus each year
• About 90% of students who die by suicide have a diagnosable mental illness at time of death

Active Minds’ Mission

• To utilize peer outreach ("the student voice") to increase students’ awareness of mental health issues, symptoms of mental illness, and available resources for seeking help
• To serve as liaison between students and the administration/mental health community, and become the point of reference for mental illness and promotion of good mental health
Active Minds on Campus:
What We Do

Utilize Peer Advocacy to...

- **Discuss**
  - Encourage discussion about mental health issues
- **Educate**
  - Educate students about signs, symptoms and prevalence of mental illness; and available resources
- **Expose**
  - Expose students to other people who have experienced mental illness
    - Especially young adults who have been successful while living with a mental illness
- **Plan campus-friendly events**
  - ...that reach as many members of the campus community as possible!

Active Minds Chapters:
Sample Events

- Mental Health Awareness Week
  - Speakers, Panels, brown bag lunch sessions, movie screenings
- Silver Ribbon/Wristband for the Brain Campaign
- Basic educational campaigns
  - Flyering, handing out brochures from NIMH, Counseling Center, ADAA
- Charity Coffeehouse, Vigils
- Stress Relief Activities during Final Exams
- Journal Publications
- "Stomp out Stigma" Run

Active Minds:
Role within the University
and Mental Health Community

- Student-run, volunteer, organization...
  - 7-10 member Executive Board
  - 5-10 other dedicated members
  - Listserve of 200-300 students
  - Part of Student Activities Council
  - Funding
  - Staff/Faculty Advisor

- ...With support from, and affiliation with:
  - Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS)
  - Vice Provost of University Life, other Student Affairs Administrators
Active Minds:
Role within the University and Mental Health Community (cont.)

- Promote local Depression Screenings
- Participate in local Out of the Darkness Walks
- Volunteer at local mental health agencies
- Present to local high schools

Who is in Active Minds?
Generally...
- Students with diagnosed mental health disorders
- Students with family members or friends who live with mental illness
- Suicide Survivors
- Psychology majors, Nursing students, Social Work students
- Students simply interested in learning more *

*Spans the range of college majors!

Why Peer Advocacy?
- Non-threatening
- Empowers students into being proactive against the stigma that they have encountered
- Free labor!
- Administrators respond well to students
- Friends helping friends
- Students are the best ones to know how, and when, to most effectively reach other students
  - social marketing campaigns
- First defenders vs. First responders
  - "Students are the main line of defense, but often the last to be heard" (University of Pennsylvania President Judith Rodin)
- Capitalizes on the energy of young adults, and ensures a future of advocates
Active Minds, Inc.'s
Vision
To destigmatize mental illness by promoting open, enlightened discussion of mental health issues; and to create a better life for all who suffer.
To capitalize on the energy and dedication of young adults in the fight against the stigma that surrounds mental illness; and to educate, enlighten, and empower all young adults to ensure their own mental health before it ever reaches a tragic stage.