Adapting the Air Force Suicide Prevention Model for Campuses: Cornell University

SAMHSA Campus Suicide Prevention Campus
Grantee Meeting
January 2007

Introduction

• Mental health is vital to the University’s academic mission
• Mental health needs of students present a growing challenge
• Trends: effective treatment, decreasing stigma
• Increasing recognition of ubiquity of mental health problems as well as our responsibility to reach out and support students who are in distress
Political Will-Leadership Structure

Executive Committee on Campus Health & Safety

President’s Council on Alcohol and Other Drugs

Council on Mental Health and Welfare
Political Will-Caring Community

"We have a focus here, and we hope to draw you into the focus and bring your strength and spirit and heart along, to develop a caring community everywhere that there is the name Cornell...I urge you, as you move through the wonderful and tremendous life experience that is Cornell, to think about the person next to you, the person across the hall, the person in your class and to help us build an even more caring community."

— From President Skorton’s Convocation Address, August 19, 2006

Shared Understanding-Cornell Data — NCHA 2006 Survey

• Cornell data comparable to peer institutions
• Over past year (n=1902):
  – 44% undergraduates reported feeling “so depressed that it was difficult to function”
  – 11% reported seriously contemplating suicide
  – 1.3% had attempted suicide (~175 undergrads)
Shared Understanding-Clinical Services

- 13% of student body seen last year in Gannett’s Counseling and Psychological Services.
- 6% increase in CAPS visits so far this year.
Shared Understanding-Principles Underlying Strategy

- Clinical services are necessary but not sufficient (shared responsibility)
- Mental health problems require an institution-wide, community-based network of support (collective competence)

Multilayered Interventions-Framework for Network of Student Support
Environmental Support

• Climate efforts
  – Residential Initiative - Building house programs with more direct contact with faculty
  – Caring Community - working to put in place and discern what a caring community looks like at Cornell
  – Diversity Initiatives - Recognizing that multicultural factors impact mental health

Diversity and Mental Health

“Study: Support shields kids from racist slurs”
Gannett News Service 9/26/06

“... discrimination can spur depression and behavior problems in adolescents, but it can also be counterbalanced by support from homes, friends and school...”
Community Based Services

- Community Consultation and Intervention-Partnering with academic advising, student advocacy, crisis intervention.
- Lets Talk- walk-in consultations
  [www.gannett.cornell.edu/CAPS/offsiteSupport.html](http://www.gannett.cornell.edu/CAPS/offsiteSupport.html)

Educational Strategies

- New web resources for faculty/staff
Educational Strategies

• Presentations at faculty & staff meetings
  — Focus: awareness of problem, roles & resources

• Expanding faculty-staff teams of presenters

• Phase two: skill building sessions
  — Similar to QPR (Question, Persuade & Refer)
### Continuum of Organizational Support Systems

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pre-crisis</th>
<th>Crisis</th>
<th>Post-Crisis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alert Team</td>
<td>Crisis managers</td>
<td>CAPS/Gannett on-call</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Alert Team

- Weekly meeting of key staff from across campus
- Pre/early crisis coordination of:
  - Communication
  - Fact finding
  - Case management
- Building connections to academic units
- Identification of policy issues
Sustainability-Policy Initiatives

• Communication with parents when students no longer enrolled
• Protocols for early detection (e.g., academic failure) and assessment of functioning
• Coordination with Associate Deans
• Formulation of Policy Team

“We live in a community that values, celebrates the life of the mind; in order to be successful in this enterprise we must attend to the health of the mind. Good mental and physical health is the foundation upon which excellent college education is built.”

Kent Hubbell, Dean of Students