Involving **Students** as Allies in Suicide Prevention

GLSMA Campus Grantees Meeting
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Co-presenters
Alison Malmon and Becca Frazee
Active Minds

What is going on right now on your campus to involve students?

What is the aim of these efforts?
Learning Objectives

- Understand the burden of mental illness and suicide on college students

- Identify the advantages of working with students on mental health programs

- Learn about Active Minds, a program that involves students in mental health programming; and hear firsthand how Active Minds impacts students

- Brainstorm ways to engage young adults in mental health programs on your campus, and ways to evaluate success

Mental Illness, Suicide and College Students

- Young adults aged 18-24 have highest prevalence of mental health disorders within entire population (27% compared to 22.1% of all Americans)

- 75% of people with schizophrenia experience onset between the ages of 15-25

- Nearly ½ of all college students reported feeling so depressed they could not function, and almost 10% have seriously contemplated suicide (ACHA, 2005)

- About 90% of students who die by suicide have a diagnosable mental illness at time of death
Mental Illness, Suicide, College Students, and Campus Resources

- 95% of CCDs report an increase in students coming to them already in psychiatric care, but 36% of Centers have no direct access to psychiatrists*
- 70% of CC budgets decreased or remained the same in 2005
- 90.3% of Centers believe that the number of students with severe psychological problems on campus has increased in recent years
- #1 administrative concern of CC’s is "a growing demand for services without an appropriate increase in resources"

*2005 National Survey of Counseling Center Directors

Stigma

- 1999 Surgeon General’s Report on Mental Health and Suicide; 2002 President’s New Freedom Commission
  - Stigma surrounding mental illness is a primary reason people do not seek the mental health services they need
- Leading stigma researchers…
  - have found that most effective way to lessen stigma is through contact with everyday people who suffer from mental health disorders (Corrigan et al, 2004)
Mental Illness, Suicide, College Students, and Campus Resources

Additional Burden:
• Can’t provide the “just like me” role model for suffering students

Student involvement and leadership
Why Involve Students?

• Provides a relatable face
  – Stigma-reduction
  – Role models
• Non-threatening
• Free labor!
• Reduces burden on counseling centers
• Makes students feel invested in ‘wellness’ – so cross-promotion is more successful

Why Involve Students? (cont.)

• Students are the best ones to know how, and when, to most effectively reach other students
• Gives students input into issues that are important to them
• Empowers students into being proactive against stigma they have encountered
• First defenders vs. First responders
  – “When it comes to mental health, 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 generation of mental health advocates
Active Minds: History, Purpose, and Outcomes

Active Minds: Purpose

*Active Minds on Campus*: A student-run mental health awareness, education, and advocacy organization on the college campus

*Active Minds, Inc.*: Develops and supports chapters of Active Minds on campuses nationwide, and connects all chapters and student leaders into one movement of advocates
Active Minds’ Mission

• To utilize peer outreach (“the student voice”) to increase students’ awareness of issues of mental health, 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 major point of reference for mental illness and promotion of good mental health on campus;

• And, to empower a new generation of advocates to take care of their own mental health and that of their friends and family, and who will raise their children with respect and understanding for issues of mental health
Active Minds’ Vision

• To destigmatize mental illness by promoting an 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.

Active Minds on Campus: What Chapters 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

Talk It Out
Panel Discussion
Student Panelists from Active Minds and CUMSE will talk about their personal experiences with diagnosis, treatment, and how they are coping in college with mental health issues and the importance of seeking help. A Q&A will follow and the floor will be open to the audience for further questions.

Active Minds Chapters:
Sample Events (cont.)

• Charity Coffeehouse, Vigils
• Stress Relief Activities during Final Exams
• Journal Publications
• “Stomp out Stigma” Run
Active Minds Presents...

Mentality
A collection of experiences and information regarding mental health.

Ice Cream Study Break

Come Learn about Penn's Resources Available to Help You Succeed! Learn more about:
THE DEPARTMENT OF ACADEMIC SUPPORT PROGRAMS
The Writing Center
The Career and Enterprise Development Center
The Office of Student Disabilities Services

SUNDAY, APRIL 24
3pm
McClend Hall Quad
FREE Ice Cream

Gratefully yours,
Active Minds, Penn, Mental Health Advocacy, Education, and Advocacy Group

Famous People with Mental Illness

- Elvis Presley shares his stories as a recovering alcoholic
- Susan B. Anthony suffered from depression for over 10 years
- John Lennon was diagnosed with bipolar disorder
- John Adams, the founder of the United States, suffered from paranoia
- Abraham Lincoln was known for his intense temper and occasional outbursts
- W.E.B. Du Bois was a journalist and scholar who suffered from depression
- Lyle Alzado, former NFL player, died of CTE at age 42

This is a collection of facts and information about mental health. If you need help, please seek support from a professional.
Active Minds:
Role within the University

• Student-run, volunteer, organization
  – Part of Student Activities Council
  – Staff/Faculty Advisor (in Counseling Center or elsewhere)

• With support from, and affiliation with,:
  – Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS)
  – Other Student Affairs Administrators

• Work to promote depression/eating disorders/alcohol/ etc. screenings

• Advertise on-campus and online resources

Who is in Active Minds?

Generally…

• Students with diagnosed mental health disorders
• Students with family members/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 Active Minds?: Outcomes

– Counseling Center Intake Forms

– 2006 study by Masters Student Kathleen McKinney, School of Social Work, Colorado State University
  • Indicated significant decrease in levels of stigma of students involved in Active Minds in just eight weeks

– Qualitative Data

Active Minds on Your Campus?

• Visit www.activeminds.org for a full list of chapters

• Will be visiting Boston, MA; Houston, TX; Atlanta, GA; Twin Cities, MN; Southern OR and Northern CA in spring 2007

• Contact alexis@activemindsoncampus.org
Active Minds Contact Info:

Alison K. Malmon
Founder and Executive Director
amalmon@activeminds.org

Becca Frazee
Chapters Coordinator

1875 Connecticut Ave, NW Suite 418
Washington, DC 20009
202-719-1177
http://www.activeminds.org

A college degree is not a sign that one is a finished product but an indication a person is prepared for life.

- Reverend Edward A. Malloy, Monk's Reflections