Active Minds, Inc.:  
Reaching Out to Young Adults on Campus  
State/Tribal/Adolescents at Risk Suicide Prevention Grantee Meeting  
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Alison K. Malmon  
Founder and Executive Director  
amalmon@activeminds.org

1875 Connecticut Ave, NW; Suite 418  
Washington, DC  20009  
202-719-1177 (ph); 413-502-1593 (f)  
http://www.activeminds.org

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%  
- Nearly 19 million Americans suffer from depression  
  - Half of report onset before age 20  
- 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)
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 each year.

- About 90% of students who die by suicide have a diagnosable mental illness at time of death.

Mental Illness, 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.
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

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
Active Minds Chapters:
Sample Events (cont.)

- Charity Coffeehouse, Vigils
- Stress Relief Activities during Final Exams
- Journal Publications
- “Stomp out Stigma” Run

Fact Sheets:

Active Minds
Famous People with Mental Illness

- John Lennon: Known for his activism for peace and his creativity.
- Anne Frank: Known for her diary documenting her life in hiding from the Nazis.
- DeNiro, who has spoken publicly about his mental health struggles.
- stigmatizing the issue of mental illness could lead to unnecessary discrimination.

Active Minds: Role within the University and Mental Health Community

- Student-run, volunteer, organization
  - Part of Student Activities Council
  - Staff/Faculty Advisor
- With support from, and affiliation with:
  - Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS)
  - Other Student Affairs Administrators
- Promote local Depression Screenings
- Work with local mental health agencies (MHA, NAMI, etc)
- 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
• Students are the best ones to know how, and when, to most effectively reach other students
• 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, Inc.:
Expressing the Voice, and Fostering a Movement, of Young Adult Mental Health Advocates

• Campus chapters around the country
• Comprehensive website: www.activeminds.org
• National Partnerships
  - Jed Foundation, NMHAC, SPAN-USA, AFSP, Mental Health America, ADAA, Screening for Mental Health, NASPA
• National ‘Mental Health on Campus’ Conference
  - October 27-28, 2006 at American University, Washington DC
  - Featuring Kay Redfield Jamison, world-renowned expert on mood disorders
  - Lizzie Simon, author of Detour: My Bipolar Road Trip in 4-D
  - Jerilyn Ross Anxiety Disorders Association of America
  - Ross Szabo, Director of Youth Outreach for NMHAC
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of Young Adult Mental Health Advocates (cont.)

• Recognition
  - 'Tipper Gore Remember the Children Award' from National Mental Health Association
  - 'Innovation Award' from Mental Health Association of Southeastern Pennsylvania
  - 'Young Leadership Award' from NARSAD, the Mental Health Research Association


Active Minds, Inc.’s 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.

“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.”
- Margaret Mead