



East Carolina University

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Suicide Education and Awareness at ECU ([SEA@ECU](#) [1]) will focus on reducing incidences of suicide and attempted suicide by enhancing the mental health and substance use services available to all members of the 29,000-plus student body at East Carolina University (ECU), the third-largest campus (by enrollment) in the University of North Carolina System (ECU Instructional, Planning, and Assessment, n.d.).

The onset of mental health disorders often occurs when individuals are in their mid-teens to mid-twenties, the age of college preparation and attendance. The NSDUH 2016 survey found nearly 22 percent of college students experience mental illness or serious mental illness in the past year.

Further, over 2 million students had serious thoughts of suicide; 725,000 had made a suicide plan; 484,000 attempted suicide, and over 300,000 either received medical care or stayed at least overnight in the hospital because of a suicide attempt. The use of alcohol and other drugs by college students, though often dismissed or downplayed as "typical" of that group, has been strongly tied suicidal ideation in college students (Park Lee, Lipari, Hedden, Kroutil, & Porter, 2017). Within this broad population of college students, three subpopulations are particularly susceptible to mental health and/or substance use disorders: veterans (and their dependents), members of the LGBTQ community, and those in recovery from substance use. [SEA@ECU](#) [1] will coordinate and enhance the university's current prevention and treatment programming to prevent death and injury due to suicide or suicide attempts; improve the identification and treatment of at-risk students; provide education and treatment services to students with mental health and substance use disorders; promote student help-seeking behaviors; reduce negative public attitudes toward individuals with mental health and substance use disorders; and generally improve mental health services for all students.

The project will increase linkage among ECU behavioral healthcare providers to better identify and serve students' behavioral healthcare needs; to provide students, staff, and faculty with education, resources, and training to improve their knowledge and skills when asking questions that might prevent student suicide and to respond effectively to students in crisis and/or with mental health and substance use disorders. The project will achieve these goals by increasing outreach services; administering voluntary mental health and substance use disorder screenings and assessments; educating students,



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families, faculty, staff, and individuals about mental health and substance use disorders; and by providing evidencebased prevention and treatment services to students with mental health and substance use disorders. SEA@ECU [1] will impact every member of each ECU freshman class—an estimated 23,000 students per year, and 69,000 across the three-year span of the project. It will also provide prevention services, including one-on-one professional counseling, free of charge, to as many as 760 students in all: 180 in the project's first year, and 290 each in the grant's penultimate and final years.

Links within this resource

[1] <mailto:SEA@ECU>

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