

Implementing Mental Health Screenings in Rural Southeast Iowa: Challenges or Opportunities?

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Great Prairie AEA Service Area

- 14 counties in southeast Iowa
- 40,000 Students
- 3,700 Teachers & Administrators
- 35 School Districts - 3,360 Square Miles
- District Size Range 67---4,582 students
- Agency merger during 2007-2008 year.

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**Youth Suicide Prevention Grant**

- Two School Social Workers are part time TeenScreen Coordinators (1 day per week).
- Goal—Increasing Student Participation:
  - A. Increase consent rates.
  - B. Increase number of screening sites.
  - C. Retrain existing sites (staff turnover).

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**Great Prairie AEA Screening History**

- ✓ 2004-2005 School Social Workers trained in in New York City.
- ✓ Jan. 2005 3 School Districts Begin Screenings.
- ✓ 2007-2008 Agency Merger (Great River & Southern Prairie)
- ✓ 2009-2010 Expansion to 16 active school district screening sites.

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**Screening & Referral Activities for 2008-09**

- ✓ **933** Students offered Screening Opportunity
- ✓ **265** (28% of those offered screening) received parental consent and were screened
- ✓ **43** (16% of those screened) were referred for mental or non-mental health services
- ✓ **24** (56% of those referred) received a mental health referral

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**PITFALLS TO AVOID**

- ✓ Technology, Technology, Technology.  
Get to know the tech directors!
- ✓ Don't fall for "Where's the Beef?"  
Be prepared with answers for questions.
- ✓ Don't dwell on setbacks---stay focused!
- ✓ Leaving out teachers on the basics of the TeenScreen process.
- ✓ Did I mention Technology?

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**MUST DO'S**  
**for Successful Screenings!**

- ✓ **Passion Factor—Who's the Believers?**
- ✓ **Use Positive Student Feedback!**
- ✓ **Maximize School & Community Resources.**
- ✓ **Find that "Perfect" incentive!** Tootsie Pops.
- ✓ **BE PROACTIVE!!!**
- ✓ **Use the "Budweiser" Model. Not too \_\_\_\_, Not too \_\_\_\_, the difference is \_\_\_\_.**

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**Katherine's Success Story**  
**(real story)**

- Living with relative, no legal guardian.
- Natural parent refused to sign consent.
- **Katherine talked parent into signing for the mental health screening.**
- Screen positive for depression and suicide ideation.
- School social worker tracked down natural parent in town 50 miles away.
- Obtained mental health counseling.

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**Challenges or Opportunities?**

- Is your glass half full or empty?
- Active sites are promoting mental health!
- Expect a challenge and Never Give Up!
- Are mental health screenings necessary?

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**Quotes from participants...“Yes!”**

- “Good mental health helps you learn.”
- “I like that my school cares about me and not just my grades.”
- “I thought it was helpful and feel relieved that I was able to get my problems out.”
- “Have everyone take it!”

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**Contact Information**

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