

Preventing Suicide through Campus Leadership & Professional Advocacy

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The Context:

- College Student Mental Health
 - A time of very high risk
 - 1 in 3 report prolonged periods of depression
 - 1 in 4 report suicidal thoughts or feelings
 - 1 in 7 report engaging in abnormally reckless behavior
 - 1 in 7 report difficulty functioning at school due to mental illness
 - In the last 15 years:
 - Number of students with depression has doubled
 - Number of students who are suicidal has tripled
 - Nearly half say they had no education on mental health before starting college
 - More than 60% would talk with a friend about their mental health problems
 - Only 30% say they would go to a college counseling center
 - Demand for College Counseling services has increased 40-50% over last 5 years
- College Students and Suicide
 - Suicide is the 2nd leading cause of death in college students
 - About 1.4% of college students attempt suicide each year
 - Over 10,000 college students attempt suicide each year (10% of them complete)
 - 30% of colleges reports at least one suicide in the past year

The New Ohio Law:

- Ohio House Bill 28 (implementation date 10/15/2016)
 - Each state institution of Higher Education must develop and implement a policy to advise students and staff on suicide prevention programs available on and off campus
- Ohio Mental Health & Addiction Services shall work with the Ohio Dept. of Higher Education

The Ohio State University Suicide Prevention Program:

- The largest campus suicide prevention program in the nation, in its 9th year of existence
- A stand-alone office, situated within the academic arm of the university, that uses evidence-based practices and conducts research on program effectiveness
- A partnership model, with more than 50 campus offices and programs, all dedicated to a coordinated effort in suicide prevention, outreach, and education
- Initially funded through a federal grant (6 years), now funded by OSU Office of Student Life, College of Education & Human Ecology, and other partners (3 years)
- Philosophical Underpinnings of the OSU program:
 - Suicide is preventable, and stigma reduction is critical to reduce suicide risk and promote a campus culture that encourages mental health help-seeking.
 - Active and engaged campus and community partners are essential to program success because *Suicide Prevention is a Shared Campus Responsibility*.
 - Suicide prevention and mental health are critical components of student academic and overall success.
 - Suicide prevention programming should use, and contribute to, empirical research and should be grounded in evidence-based best practices.

Major Components of the OSU Suicide Prevention Program:

- Outreach and Advocacy
 - Large-scale anti-stigma campaigns for students, faculty, and staff
 - Student-led initiatives and programs (e.g., RU-OK Day; Out of the Darkness Walk)
 - Information and outreach for faculty (e.g., syllabi statements on mental health & suicide; Guide to Assist Distressed Students)
 - Electronic resources (e.g., website; social media campaigns)
 - Smartphone APP
 - Print materials (e.g., program brochures; campus signage; hotline magnets)
 - Outreach materials with links to local (off-campus) services & hotline
- Education
 - Gatekeeper Training (REACH, a training program developed at OSU, is a 90 minute training to help people recognize distressed individuals and to help them access care)
 - Nearly 10,000 students, faculty, and staff have received gatekeeper training
 - Follow-up surveys demonstrate lasting changes in attitudes & behaviors
 - An online version of REACH is being finalized
 - Specialized REACH trainings have been adapted for high risk groups (e.g., veterans, international students, medical students, resident advisors)
 - Suicide Prevention Education Workshops for campus groups (e.g., faculty, freshmen, journalism students & media)
 - Maymester Course with advanced training and education & training for local hotline
 - Postvention education and training for those affected by suicide
- Policy and Programming
 - Development of campus-wide policies for crisis intervention, reintegration of hospitalized students, and postvention responses
- Mental Health & Screening Referral
 - Online screening program (RUOK Buckeyes) offered to >4,000 graduate students/year
- Student Leadership Development
 - Three undergraduate student groups (Buckeye Campaign Against Suicide; Peers Reaching Out; REACH Across Borders), for advocacy & education
 - Three staff interns (including a student veteran)
 - Two Graduate Associates
 - Opportunities for all students to provide workshops at state and national conferences
- State/National/International Leadership & Consultation
 - Inaugural recipient of Jed Campus Seal for Campus Mental Health
 - Partnership Model nationally recognized
 - Involvement in state/national/international policy, programming, and consultation

Next Steps:

- OhioMHAS is developing website for colleges, with input & resources from OSU program
- Ohio Colleges & Universities will be taking the next step to offer prevention programming, outreach, and education
- Each campus needs an individual or office to lead the campus effort & to serve as liaison
- ***How can counselor education departments across the state provide campus leadership as HB28 is implemented?***