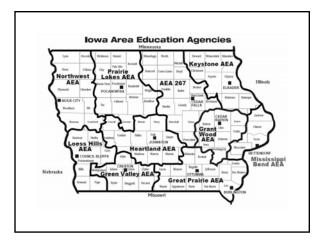
## Implementing Mental Health Screenings in Rural Southeast Iowa: Challenges or Opportunities?

Steve Presley, MSW, LISW School Social Worker/TeenScreen Coordinator Great Prairie Area Education Agency



## **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.

### **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).

#### **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.

## <u>Screening & Referral Activities for</u> <u>2008-09</u>

- √ 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?

#### **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 \_\_\_\_.

# 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?

## 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!"

Burlington, Iowa.

#### **Contact Information**

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