

# Mental Health Outreach and Stigma Reduction Campaigns

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# Saint Peter's College At a Glance

(During Grant Period '08-'11)

2300 Full and Part Time Undergraduate students

44 % Resident Full Time Students

56 % Commuter Full Time Students

## Undergraduate students by race:

Hispanic/Latino: Total 25.7% **29.0% (Female)** 21.6% (Male)

715 Full and Part Time Graduate Students

## Graduate students by race:

Hispanic/Latino: Total 17.5% **18.8% (Female)** 15.4% (Male)

# The “New” Non Traditional Student

- 1st generation college students
- Students with possible mental health diagnosis
- Struggling with various cultural and family conflicts (acculturation & assimilation)
- Students with significant responsibilities outside of the school setting
- Students struggling economically

# Focus For Suicide Prevention: SPC

## Biopsychosocial Risk Factors

- Impulsive and/or aggressive tendencies
- History of trauma or abuse
- Previous suicide attempt
- Family history of suicide

## Socialcultural Risk Factors

- Lack of social support and sense of isolation
- Stigma associated with help-seeking behavior
- Barriers to accessing health care, especially mental health and substance abuse treatment
- (For Latinas- Family discourse)

# Barriers To Services Among Minority Populations

- Stigma often prevents minority populations to seek out services on the onset of emotional problems
- Minority populations often drop out of services prematurely, which appears to be influenced by cultural reactions to mental illness
- Rejection of traditional mental health services, encouraging minorities to seek “culturally inherent care”
- Lack or Insufficient health Insurance
- Mistrust and Fear of Treatment
- Negative family views of mental health treatment (behaviors seen as attention seeking behaviors)
- Importance of not sharing family business with strangers

# Increasing Protective Factors

- Effective clinical care for mental, physical and substance use disorders
- Easy access to a variety of clinical interventions and support for help seeking
- Strong connections to family and community support
- Support through ongoing medical and mental health care relationships
- Skills in problem solving, conflict resolution and nonviolent handling of disputes
- Cultural and religious beliefs that discourage suicide and support self-preservation

# Stigma Reduction Campaigns

## Families and Students

- Outreach to parents through various campus activities such as **Open house** and **Family Weekend**
- CPD lead **parent discussion groups** regarding signs and symptoms of At-Risk students during First Year Orientation sessions
- Participation in information fairs aimed at families- providing **parent specific “goody bags”** with mental health information
- Coordination of activities with programs on campus (EOF, Academic Success Program, Step up, Student run organizations)
- Community consultants of diverse cultural backgrounds



CPD Latino Heritage Month  
Mental Health Awareness and  
Stigma reduction Campaign  
September 2008

# Culturally Sensitive Tools

- ✓ Encouraging family role in seeking out services for At-Risk students (phone consultations)
- ✓ Translation of key materials (i.e. Top ten tips for parents)
- ✓ Mental Health Literature and Giveaways specifically for families
- ✓ Family focused link on CPD website: includes signs of At-risk behaviors, student stress periods, recommendations, etc.





# Sample Questions Explored

(Parent Session)

Why are you here today?

Who decided to enroll in college: You or your student?

Family decision?

Why do you want your student to attend college?

What is the role of your student in the family?

What sacrifices do you anticipate making for your student to attend?

Think: What is the current level of communication in the household? If great how to keep it up, if troublesome how to improve.


# Parent Outreach Program

## Recognizing Common feelings:

- Joy and pride about reaching important milestones
- Excitement about starting college, making and building new relationships, change...
- Enthusiastic about the opportunity of independence
- Looking forward to learning opportunities
- Overwhelmed with many choices
- Lack of confidence
- Fear of leaving what is familiar
- **Stressed about finances**
- Indecisiveness
- Anxiety about available resources for learning disabilities or special needs
- Nervous about what the future will bring
- Concerns about preexisting mental health conditions

# Helping Families Make A Smooth Transition

“How can you and your family get through these feelings, alleviate stress and make this process run more smoothly?”



- Behaviors seen in the classroom may be a result of multifaceted needs.
- Student needs outside of the classroom may significantly interfere with the Educational experience.
- Students may be embarrassed, ashamed or afraid to inform professors or family members of barriers
- Addressing behaviors early will help to minimize classroom disruption and will enhance student success
- With proper supports these students can excel at college

# Skits- Parent Session

- A well rounded education can increase the chances of financial success and employment opportunities, but it also helps to provide social rewards: Developing skills that are useful in the “real world”

## Skit #1- Party Skit

- A student wants to attend a school function, but their parent does not believe that parties are important. Student attempts to communicate the importance of working with on campus clubs and the work that went into making the party a success.

## Skit #2- Studying Late

- A student calls parent to inform them that they are staying late at school in order to join a study group. The parent hears students of the opposite sex in the background and becomes reactive. Student and parent have dialogue regarding studying expectations.

# Should you be concerned?

## Students Behaviors

- Avoidance of important paperwork/materials
- Procrastination
- Attitude/moodiness
- Pushing the boundaries (i.e. rules, curfew, etc.)
- Becoming overly dependent on others
- Drinking/Using drugs
- Changes in sleep or appetite
- Withdrawal from friends and family
- Lack of motivation
- Lack of interest in activities once enjoyed
- Participating in too many activities (Have to be in everything)

# Are you having a hard time with the college transition?

- Often yelling/reprimanding
- Becoming distant from student or others
- Overly involved in student's decision making
- Changes in sleep or appetite
- Working too many hours
- Feeling loss of control
- Feelings of incompetence
- Focusing on little things (**nitpicking**)
- Financial worries

# How to Let Go?

- Expect change
- Understand that the college years are a time for exploration (i.e. clothes, political views, relationships, career choices)
- Renegotiate expectations (i.e. curfews, drugs/alcohol, sex, relationships)
- Take comfort in the knowledge that part of you is going with your student
- Discuss academic goals and expectation ahead of time
- Ask about courses rather than focusing on grades
- Be a coach rather than trying to solve your student's problems
- \* REMEMBER- It takes flexibility and communication to find a common ground

Karen Levin Coburn & Madge Lawrence Treeger



# Parental Response To Outreach

- Positive response in post-workshop evaluations: Parents indicated feeling included in the process and noted experiencing increase sense of support from our institution.
- Increase in parent consultations for both EOF program and counseling department
- Increase in family therapy sessions held at CPD
- Increase in Latino students seeking individual sessions (family members referring to services)

\*As reflected in intake forms & CPD stats compared to pre-grant period

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