College Student Mental Health Promotion and Suicide Prevention: A Blueprint for Action

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Assumptions

- **Problem is one of the entire campus and community**
- **Include prevention *and* treatment**
- **Effective prevention is comprehensive**
  - Addresses multiple contributors
  - At both individual and environmental levels
  - Using multiple initiatives

Public Health Approach: Social Ecological Framework

- **Intrapersonal**
- **Interpersonal**
- **Institution**
- **Community**
- **Society/public policy**

Comprehensive Approach

- Prevention

- Early Intervention

- Treatment

Comprehensive Approach

- *Identify students at risk*
- *Encourage help-seeking behaviors*
- *Provide mental health services*
- *Establish and follow crisis management procedure*
- *Restrict potentially lethal means*
- *Develop life skills*
- *Promote social networks*

Identify Students at Risk

- Screening of high-risk populations
- Train gatekeepers to recognize signs of distressed or distressing students
- Create interface between disciplinary process and counseling/MHS
- Establish cross-department case management committee
- Refer identified students to programs and services

Encourage help-seeking behaviors

- De-stigmatize mental health problems
  - Education
  - Contact
  - Advocacy
- Remove barriers to help-seeking
- Enhance accessibility of MHS

Establish Crisis Management Procedures

- Establish policies and implement programs that respond to suicide attempts and high-risk behavior
- Respond with comprehensive post-vention program

Provide Mental Health Services

- Train MHS providers to identify and treat depression, threats of suicide, and other emotional disorders
- Refer cases as appropriate
- Institute procedures (e.g., intake form)
- Engage in prevention & outreach activities
- Train personnel on confidentiality, notification, and legal issues

Means Restriction

- Limit access to potentially lethal means
  - Buildings (towers, rooftops, balconies, windows)
  - Firearms
  - Chemicals
  - Alcohol
  - Other drugs

Life Skills Development

- Improve students' management of the rigors of college life
- Equip students with tools to recognize and manage triggers and stressors

Social Network Promotion

- Reduce student isolation and promote feeling of belonging
- Encourage the development of smaller groups within the larger campus community

Comprehensive Approach: Principles and Processes

- *Leadership:* president, campus task force
- *Collaboration* across campus departments
- Faculty and student *involvement*
- *Data collection*
- *Strategic planning*
- *Evaluation*

Planning/Evaluation Process

Problem Analysis/ Needs Assessment

⬇

Set long-range goals

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Consult the literature

⬇

Select program strategies,
translate these into specific activities,
and plan for evaluation

⬇

Implement program activities

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Evaluate whether goals were achieved
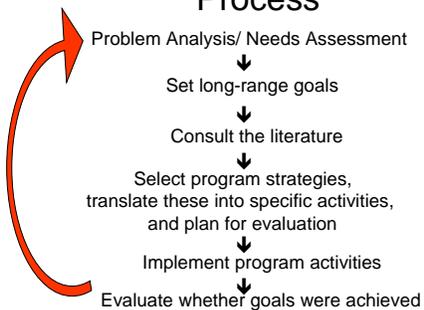
Take-home Points

- Problems must be addressed by *entire campus community*
- Problems must be addressed *at multiple levels*
- Think/plan *strategically*
  - Understand problems
  - Set goals
  - Choose evidence-, theory-, or logic-based strategies
- We're here to help!

Questions/thoughts?

Grantee Commonalities

- Strategies >> programs and interventions
  - Increase identification of students at risk
    - Gatekeeper training
  - Increase help-seeking behavior
    - Informational materials
    - Media/poster campaigns
    - Forums/seminars/speakers
  - Create/improve crisis management
    - Protocols and procedures
    - Hotline

Grantee Commonalities

- Tactics
  - Leadership
  - Collaboration
  - Comprehensive
  - Evaluation

Your Thoughts

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