



S.O.S. Suicide Prevention Program 2000-2005

*An evidence-based, cost effective
program of suicide prevention and
mental health screening for
secondary schools*

A Program of Screening for Mental Health, Inc. (SMH)
A non-profit 501 (c) (3) organization
Douglas G. Jacobs, MD, Founder & Executive Director

S.O.S. (Signs of Suicide)® Prevention Program for Secondary Schools

- **Nationally recognized suicide prevention and depression screening program for secondary schools**
- **Evidence-based**
- **Teaches students how to identify symptoms of depression and suicidality in themselves or their friends**
- **Educates teens about the relationship between depression and suicide and promotes help-seeking**
- **A video-based prevention program that includes depression screening; implemented by existing school staff**

- **Developed with assistance of and sponsored by:**
 - **National Association of School Psychologists**
 - **National Association of School Nurses**
 - **American School Counselors Association**
 - **National Association of Secondary School Principals**
- **Used by more than 1500 schools nationwide**
- **Supported in part by:**
 - **Federal funding**
 - **Foundation grants**
 - **Registration fees from participating schools, school districts, and states**

SOS is the only school based program to...

- ✓ **Show a reduction in suicide attempts in a randomized-controlled study** (*American Journal of Public Health, 3/04*)
- ✓ **Be selected by SAMHSA for its National Registry of Evidence-Based Programs and Practices**

SOS has also documented dramatic increases in help-seeking

(Adolescent and Family Health, 2003)

Large-Scale SOS Initiatives

Statewide SOS Initiatives

Massachusetts: 2005

Massachusetts Department of Public Health funding supported high schools using the SOS program.

“The SOS program has been shown to reduce suicide attempts and empowers students by helping them understand the connection between undiagnosed and untreated mental illness and suicide.”

**- Alan E. Holmlund
Suicide Prevention Program Coordinator
MA Department of Public Health**

Statewide SOS Initiatives

Ohio: 2005

An appropriation secured by Senator Mike DeWine will bring SOS to 300 schools and 100,000 students.

“This proven program will help save the lives of our nation’s teens and young adults by getting them the help they need.”

- Senator Mike DeWine, R-OH

Countywide SOS Initiatives

Tarrant County, TX: 2004

A coalition of local organizations in Tarrant County is bringing the program to 54,000 students.

“It’s exciting to have a program that we can fully recommend to each school district in our area. We feel like we are taking steps to save young lives.”

**- Lauralee Harris, Executive Director,
Mental Health Association of Tarrant County**

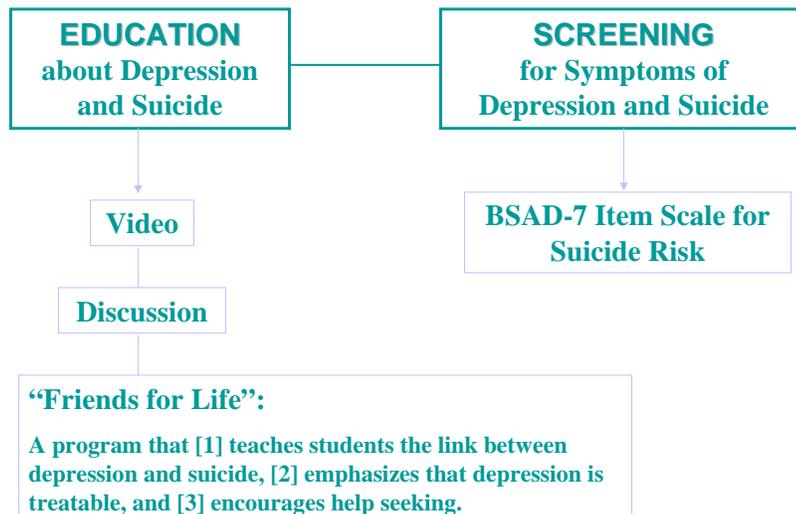
Implementation at State Level

- Provides customized program kits for all schools (e.g. state-specific demographic questions can be added to screening forms to better evaluate results)
- Provides in-state training sessions and teleconferences
- Provides state-specific evaluation and results of the program delivered to the state agency overseeing the program
- Cost: Less than \$1 per student

Overview of the SOS Program

- **Program combines education and screening.**
- **Emphasizes the relationship between suicide and mental illness.**
- **Considered effective by those who use it.**
- **Evidence of changes in knowledge and attitudes about mental illness and suicide among students.**
- **Evidence of lowered suicidal ideation and suicide attempts.**
- **Excellent safety profile.**
- **Typically implemented during one or two class periods.**
- **Easily implemented by existing school personnel; requires minimal training.**

Combines 2 prominent approaches to suicide prevention:



The A.C.T. Technique

The Action Steps Taught by the SOS Program

The SOS Program teaches teens that depression is a treatable illness and empowers them to respond to a potential suicide of a friend or family member by using the A.C.T. technique:

A.C.T.

Acknowledge the signs of suicide
Respond with Care
Tell a responsible adult

S.O.S. Program Implementation

at the school level

Program Components

Each school receives:

- Training Video and Implementation Manual
- Video and discussion guide – main teaching tools
- Depression Screening Forms (English and Spanish)
- Parent educational and screening materials (English and Spanish)
- Posters
- Educational Brochures
- Postvention Guidelines



Implementation Procedures

- Local school personnel implement the program with materials provided by SMH: School Psychologists, Health Educators, School Nurses, School Counselors, Student Assistance Professionals
- Usually implemented in one classroom period:
 - Students view and discuss video in classroom
 - Students complete screening form in classroom
- Entire student body or a select portion of student body may be screened (i.e. freshman) depending on the school's resources
- Screenings may be taken with or without identification
- Parent version of screening forms and information provided; assists in the identification of depression and suicidality and helps initiate family discussion
- Active parental permission

Accessing Treatment

- Encourages student help-seeking

BASED ON THE VIDEO AND/OR SCREENING, I FEEL

I **need** to talk to someone ...

I do not need to talk to someone ...

ABOUT MYSELF OR A FRIEND.

NAME (PRINT) _____

HOMEROOM SECTION: _____

TEACHER _____

IF YOU WISH TO SPEAK WITH SOMEONE, YOU WILL BE CONTACTED WITHIN 24 HOURS. IF YOU WISH TO SPEAK WITH SOMEONE SOONER, PLEASE APPROACH STAFF IMMEDIATELY.

- Encourages collaboration with local mental health facilities and individual professionals for increased access to treatment

Evaluation of the S.O.S. Program

by participating school professionals

2001-2002

School-Level Program Evaluation

Evaluation of 233 Participating Schools

Assessing the quality of program components

Assessing the safety of program implementation
within the student body

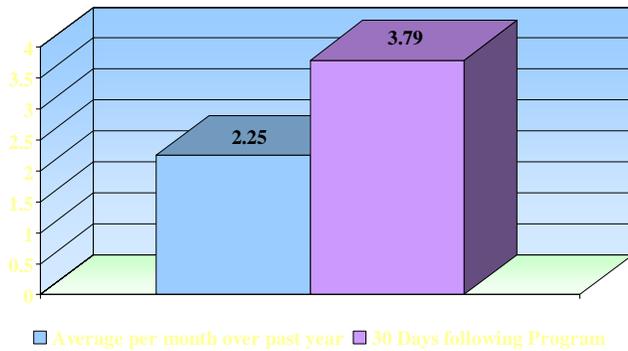
Assessing the burden on school support staff after
implementation of the program

Assessing the efficacy of the program

Analysis of School Demographics

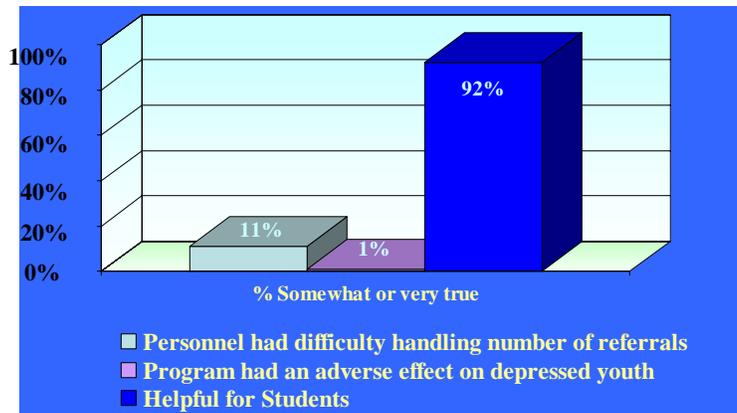
- Mean Student Enrollment: 924
- Race:
 - 64% White
 - 12% Black
 - 10% Hispanic
 - 3% Asian
 - 2% Native American
- Locale:
 - 27% Urban
 - 33% Suburban
 - 41% Rural
- School Type:
 - 85% Public
 - 13% Private (day)
 - 2% Boarding
- Percent Qualifying for A Free or Reduced Price Lunch: 21%

Average Number of Students Seeking Counseling on Behalf of a Friend

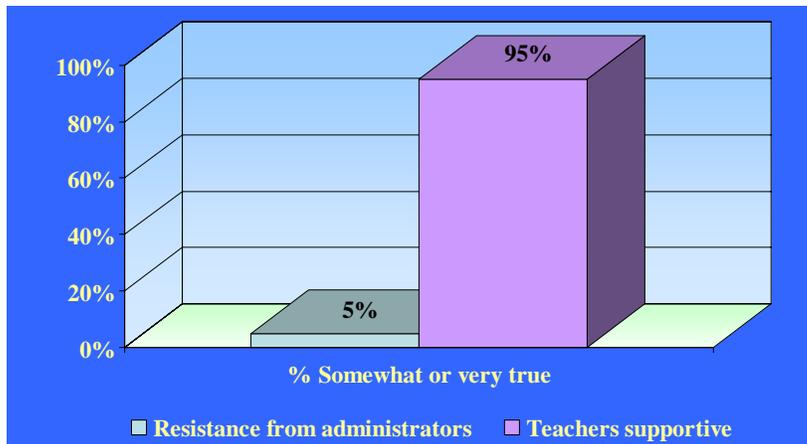


- 68% increase in help-seeking on behalf of friends.

Evaluating Risks and Rewards



Support/Resistance for Program by School Personnel



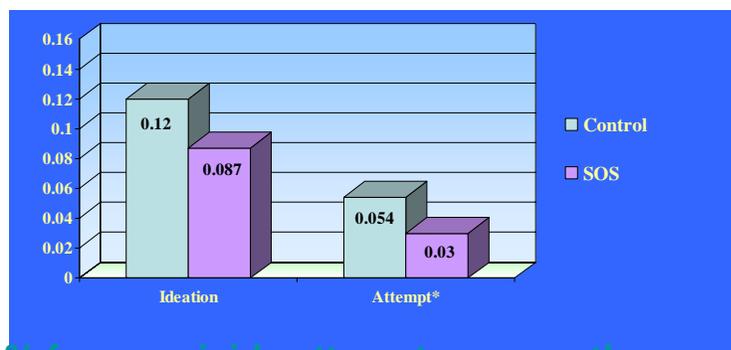
SOS Student-Level Research Findings

**First school-based
suicide prevention program to
demonstrate significant reductions
in self-reported suicide attempts
in a randomized controlled study**

*Student-Level Randomized Controlled Trial
(n = 2100)*

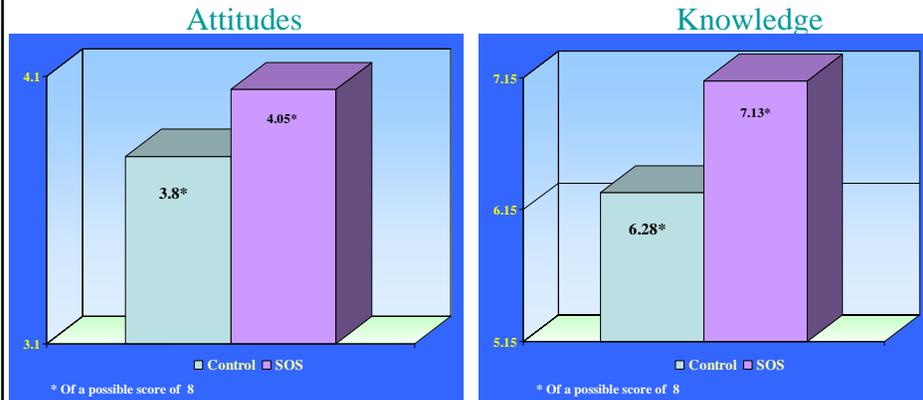
Outcomes Assessed 3 Months After Intervention

**Effects of SOS Program on
Suicidal Ideation and Suicide Attempts**



- **44% fewer suicide attempts among the students who completed the SOS program. Statistically significant at 0.05.**

Effects of SOS Program on Knowledge and Attitudes About Depression/Suicide



Statistically Significant at 0.05

Research Study Student Demographics

5 Schools:

Hartford, CT
Columbus, GA

- **ESL During High School**

82% No
18% Yes

- **Gender:**

49% Male
51% Female

- **Grade in School:**

65% Freshman
20% Sophomore
12% Junior
18% Senior

- **Race:**

17% White
25% Black
42% Hispanic
10% Multi-ethnic
6% Other

Evaluation Summary

- **The first school based educational-screening program to demonstrate effects on suicidality via a controlled study within student populations.**
- **Findings indicate attitudes and knowledge have an impact on suicidality.**
- **School-based program evaluation showed SOS program was effective in initiating help seeking among students.**
- **Safe for students.**
- **Received and rated positively by users.**

NEW! 2005

Booster Program for Graduating Seniors

- **Reinforces messages of the SOS program**
- **Teaches students how to access resources on college campus or in the community**
- **Provides resources for parents to aid in communicating with children about mental health issues when away from home**
- **Short video and discussion guide**
- **Includes depression screening**

SOS Program for Middle Schools

IN DEVELOPMENT

- An age-appropriate (6th,7th graders) version of the high school program
- Will be available for the 2006-2007 School Year

Screening For Mental Health, Inc.

- Well-established non-profit
- Proven track record of evidence-based programs that are easily implemented by local clinicians
- 1991: Pioneered the concept of large scale mental health screening and education with National Depression Screening Day
- In 2004, nearly 550,000 screenings were completed through its programs
- Ongoing collaboration with:
 - government agencies
 - national health and mental health organizations
 - membership organizations representing school-based professionals
 - thousands of health and mental health facilities, colleges, and secondary schools

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