Community-Based Media Project for Suicide Prevention

Promising Strategies in Risk Communication

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Presenter Disclosures

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(1) The following personal financial relationships with commercial interests relevant to this presentation existed during the past 12 months:

No relationships to disclose
Suicide in Montana

• During 2010, suicide rates among Montana youth were twice the national average
• From 2000 to 2009, suicide was the #2 cause of death among youths in Montana
• The 2011 Youth Risk Behavior Survey found that 6.5 percent of youths in grades 9-12 had attempted suicide
GHEF’s Approach

- Field research
- Consensus-building forums
- Interdisciplinary approach involving NGOs, public health organizations, schools and academic centers, the media and other assets
Building Partnerships

• County and State health departments
• Montana State University Billings (Professor Sarah Keller)
• Non-profit organizations
• Middle schools and high schools
• Radio stations and local newspapers
Challenges to Overcome

• “Cowboy-Up” mentality/stereotype
• Gaps in well-being awareness
• Gaps in mental health services
• Social and geographical isolation
The Goals

• Get the population at ease with communicating about depression and suicide
• Improve awareness of, and access to, Montana’s suicide-prevention resources
• Increase self-help in accessing school counselors, public health, hotlines and other outlets
Let’s Talk
Starting the conversation about suicide
Giving Youth the Power

• Using multimedia tools and collaborative forums, *Let’s Talk* educates and empowers youth in media workshops

• Their art, stories and performances are presented to generate conversations
A Trans-Media Approach

- Community-based theater performances
- A youth photography workshop and exhibits
- A social media website to promote awareness and use of suicide-prevention resources
- Branching out! Other media and recreational activities
Let’s Talk

Awareness and education in the context of regional culture
“I feel like we can make an impact. It’s not like we started a fire, but we definitely made a spark in the community!”

Sarah Mosdal
Teen Participant, Let’s Talk Miles City
Preliminary Results

• When asked, 66% had heard of a local suicide prevention campaign
• 35% knew the name of the Let’s Talk campaign
Preliminary Results

• 62% said they would go to the Internet for information on suicide and depression
• 32% knew of specific resources they could go to for suicide and depression
After Exposure to Let’s Talk

Students were more likely to feel comfortable talking to someone else if a friend confided in them about suicidal thoughts or intentions.

(pre-test mean = 1.56, SD = 1.39; post-test mean = 1.96, SD = 1.02; p ≤ .01)
After Exposure to Let’s Talk

Students were more likely to trust professional sources for confiding about suicidal thoughts or depression. More of these students considered a teacher, school counselor or social workers to be trustworthy sources to communicate with about a suicidal thought.

(pre-test mean = 2.80, SD = 1.43; post-test mean = 3.06, SD = 1.1; p ≤ .05)
Ongoing Effectiveness Study

The National Institutes of Health, Montana IDeA Networks for Biomedical Research Excellence, funded a three-pronged social scientific study to evaluate this approach to increasing awareness and access to suicide prevention resources.
Applicability and Scalability

The underlying concepts of this project—creating effective awareness and education in the context of a regional culture—can be applied with success to many health equity challenges in different regions of the United States and throughout the world.
Needs for Success

• Spirited guidance
• Community engagement and commissioning
• Commitment of resources
Needs for Success

• Miles City: www.letstalkmilescity.org
• Billings: www.letstalkbillings.org
• GHEF USA: www.ghef.org
• GHEF International: www.ghef.org/ch