Programs to Prevent Student Suicide

School Resources to Support Military-Connected Students is a project by the Clearinghouse for Military Family Readiness an applied research center at The Pennsylvania State University and is funded by the Department of Defense Education Activity Grant number HE1254-19-0009.

For more information on these resources click on the links below:

https://schoolresources.militaryfamilies.psu.edu/

https://militaryfamilies.psu.edu/

https://www.psu.edu/

https://dodeagrants.org/

Our goal is to provide school personnel with free, evidence-based resources to support military-connected students. This training is part of our Suicide Prevention series.

Important Reminders

Before starting this training, please read the items below carefully and check the box in front of each item to indicate your understanding.

- The following content discusses suicide and may be upsetting to some individuals.
- Follow all district, local, state, and federal regulations. This training is **NOT** intended to replace or override existing procedures or laws.

Introduction

What is the purpose of this training?

Schools that do not implement general behavioral and emotional risk programming, or identify suicide prevention programming as a need at the universal level, may want to consider suicide-specific prevention programming. The need for suicide risk prevention in educational settings is significant as many attempts and ideations are unreported (according to the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention), and, therefore, targeted prevention or interventions may not be prescribed for many students at risk. Although many suicidal risk factors are challenging to change (e.g., genetics, family history, childhood experiences), prevention and interventions must be targeted toward factors that can be changed (e.g., access to means, depression symptoms, substance use/abuse).

For more information click on the link below.

https://afsp.org/learn-the-facts

Objective

The goal of this training is to increase your confidence in your ability to:

Identify evidence-based programs to prevent student suicide.

How confident are you in your ability to do this now?

Please click on the link below to submit your response.

Verify that you have completed each of the tasks below before proceeding with this training.

> Answered the survey question in the link.
> Clicked the arrow underneath the survey question to submit your response.
> Recorded the ID number provided after you submitted your answer to the survey question. You will need it to complete the survey at the end of this training.

Research

What is most important for me to know?

The National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) advises schools to seek and implement evidence-based programs as a means of suicide prevention, intervention, and suicide risk reduction. Berman, Jobes, and Silverman (as cited in Westfield, Jenks Kettmann, Lovmo & Hey, 2007, p. 33) identified the following components as essential to effective prevention: early detection of suicide risk and referral, identification of key resources, destigmatizing the idea of mental health treatment, training professionals who work with youth, educating parents, prevention beginning in elementary school, and postvention processes. Also, as prevention efforts reinforce the importance of safety and wellness in the school environment, they should be integrated with any school-wide climate, safety, or resiliency programs.

The U.S. Surgeon General (2012) proposed a series of goals and objectives that are considered to most effectively prevent suicide: (a) supportive family and community environments; (b) increased clinical and community prevention services; (c) promotion of available treatment and support services; (d) improving suicide prevention research evaluation and collection. The major themes across these goals are to:

1. Facilitate conversations across different systems and communities,
2. Bolster support within the family and community,
3. Recognize vulnerable groups' special needs,
4. Promote changes in systems and policies,
5. Decrease access to lethal means, and
6. Use the most updated strategies for suicide prevention.

The Suicide Prevention Resource Center (https://www.sprc.org/) identified school-based strategies that address the goals proposed by the U.S. Surgeon General. These strategies include targeted therapeutic interventions (e.g., cognitive behavior therapy, dialectical behavior therapy, group therapy) as well as universal preventions for suicide risk that focus on school-wide education for students and adults that:

- Increase awareness about depression and suicide
- Increase understanding of warning signs
- Promote positive help-seeking behaviors

There are a few programs available that can help students, school staff, and parents understand warning signs and methods for dealing with depression and youth suicide. Several programs are highlighted in this training:

The Jason Foundation

The Jason Foundation developed the suicide awareness program, A Promise for Tomorrow, to teach students about the prevalence and warning signs of suicide. According to the website, the instructional unit "will provide students or group participants with the resources and information needed to help them in the fight against the 'silent epidemic' of youth suicide." The page includes a downloadable section with a complete "teacher-friendly" lesson plan to present a

multi-session program on awareness and prevention of youth suicide. In addition, posters and resource sheets related to local resources and youth suicide facts are also available for download.

For more information click on the link below.

https://jasonfoundation.com/

Signs of Suicide (SOS)

Signs of Suicide (SOS) helps protect youth by identifying those who may be at risk for mental health problems and encouraging help-seeking and appropriate treatment. Through the SOS program, middle and high school students, school staff, and their parents will learn about depression, suicide, and the associated risks of alcohol use. Further, participants recognize warning signs within themselves and among their peers.

The SOS program consists of two main components: (1) education and (2) screening (SMH, n.d.).

1. Education: teachers will show students an educational DVD so they can learn how to recognize problems, demonstrate to others that they care, and communicate their concerns to an adult. After learning more about suicide and depression, students can fill out response cards if they are worried about themselves or a friend (SAMHSA's National Registry of Evidence-based Programs and Practices; NREPP, 2016).
2. Screening: teachers are expected to distribute Brief Screen for Adolescent Depression to their class, collect the completed screening forms, and submit them to the school counselor or school psychologist for further evaluation. School psychologists and school counselors can follow up with at-risk students as necessary.

For more information click on the link below.

https://sossignsofsuicide.org/user/login?destination

SEAS: Zero Suicide

Schools Empowering At-risk Students (SEAS): Zero Suicide is a professional development framework designed by the Clearinghouse for Military Family Readiness at the Pennsylvania State University. The SEAS: Zero Suicide framework was created to build the capacity, competence, and confidence of student support personnel (SSP) in being leaders at Department of Defense Education Activity (DoDEA) schools to prevent suicide and intervene with students at risk for suicide.

The SEAS: Zero Suicide Lessons include 90 minutes of instruction for grades K-5 and 90 minutes of instruction for grades 6-12. Each set of lesson plans contains three 30-minutes lessons. Each lesson can be divided into three 10-minute chunks of content if desired. Research suggests that the lesson plans may be more effective if each lesson is of short duration but lessons are taught more frequently.

These lesson plans were designed to fit into any preexisting frameworks or programs that already function within your school. As such, the lesson plans can be used as initial content introductions to refresher or booster lessons. For instance, if a manualized SEL program such as Second Step is used in your school, these lessons can serve as booster sessions one month following coverage of core content of the manualized program.

Each set of lesson plans includes a standard script, but the level of presentation and amount of practice can be adjusted based on the developmental level of each class. Also included are ideas for extending the lesson content to incorporate into the larger classroom or schoolwide structures. Do your best to integrate your school's unique terminology, rules, reward systems, etc. to better sustain the information shared from the lesson plans. In addition, lesson supplements (e.g., apps, websites, books, other lesson plans, and lesson handouts) are identified and intended to provide additional exposure and practice with relevant concepts. Those identified at the end of each lesson are a sample of potential supplements to the current lesson. Any indication of age or grade suggests a minimum age or grade recommendation, but more advanced students may engage with the materials as well. The lesson plans will reference additional resources (e.g., curricula, books, web links) that could lengthen the delivery time if desired.

https://schoolresources.militaryfamilies.psu.edu/

No matter the program that is implemented, school psychologists and school counselors should follow up with at-risk students as necessary. For more information, please visit the *Protocol for Handling Suspected Suicide Risk* training:

https://learning.militaryfamilies.psu.edu/school-resources/modules/suicide_15-protocol-for-handling-suspected-suicide-risk_201022/

Protocol for Handling Suspected Suicide Risk

The goal of this training is to increase your confidence in your ability to conduct an initial evaluation of a student who may be experiencing suicidal ideation to determine if a full risk assessment should be conducted.

It is important to remember that not all students who exhibit risk factors are truly contemplating suicide or engaging in self-harm. Schools should identify the protective factors within the school that can support prevention efforts and help to build resiliency in students.

Application

How might this look in my professional practice?

Remember that the goal of this training is to increase your confidence in your ability to:

Identify evidence-based programs to prevent student suicide.

Based on your review of the programs shared in this training, which of the following do you feel meet the unique needs of your school? Click on each program below to learn more about it. Considerations may include the age of your students, current school climate, most common behavioral problems, cost, time required to implement, etc.

- The Jason Foundation – https://jasonfoundation.com/
- Signs of Suicide (SOS) – https://sossignsofsuicide.org/parent/signs-suicide-program
- Schools Empowering At-Risk Students (SEAS): Zero Suicide - https://articulateusercontent.com/rise/courses/Cwho5JgeE6HnqwsOv136gY8_2HdiO2yn/UOhP-B9asCopaqPy-SEAS%2520Lesson%2520Plans.pdf

Implementation

How can I effectively implement this content in my professional practice?

Please review the considerations below regarding potential implementation strategies, barriers to implementation, and collaboration strategies related to this content. This will help you coordinate the next steps as you begin to incorporate the information presented in this training into your professional practice.

This information can also be found on a handout that you will be able to download at the end of this training.

Implementation Strategies

- Complete any and all training necessary when implementing a new program.
- Ensure and engage support from all stakeholders including parents, administrators, teachers, and community members.

Overcoming Barriers to Implementation

- Engage in ongoing communication with stakeholders about what your programming entails, why it is important, and what they can do to help support your efforts.

- Consider your timeline carefully for implementation of any new programming. For example, if your district plans on rolling out a new math curriculum in a given school year, it may not be an ideal time to add additional programming. Timing for implementation can help make your efforts more effective.

Collaboration Strategies

- Engage parents and community members to rally ongoing support.
- Regularly consult with and coach teachers and other staff when implementing new programming.

Resources

Are there any resources available to help me implement this content?

Click on the link below to download a tool that you can use to implement this content in your professional practice.

https://documentcloud.adobe.com/link/track?uri=urn:aaid:scds:US:7c5a98bf-e855-4e81-89b5-5aa7e6d16b29

Feedback

How can I help improve this training?

The objective of this training was to increase your confidence in your ability to:

Identify evidence-based programs to prevent student suicide.

Answer the questions in the link below to let us know how well this training increased your confidence in your ability to accomplish this objective. Once you have answered all of the questions, click the blue arrow button underneath to submit your responses.

https://pennstate.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_d771mLr9ZgW3kyx?modulenumber=suicide09

Verify that you have completed each of the tasks below.

> Answered all of the survey questions above. You may have to scroll to see all of the questions.
> Clicked the arrow underneath the last survey question to submit your responses.

Additional Readings

Where can I learn more about this content?

The following resources were used to create this training. If you would like more information about the information presented in this training, we encourage you to start here.

Office of the Surgeon General (US). (n.d.). 2012 National Strategy for Suicide Prevention: Goals and Objectives for Action. Retrieved October 16, 2020, from https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK109917/

Preventing Youth Suicide. (n.d.). Retrieved October 16, 2020, from https://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources-and- podcasts/school-climate-safety-and-crisis/mental-health- resources/preventing-youth-suicide

Westefeld, J. S., Jenks Kettmann, J. D., Lovmo, C., & Hey, C. (2007) High School Suicide: Knowledge and Opinions of Teachers, Journal of Loss and Trauma, 12:1, 33-44, DOI: 10.1080/15325020600757839

Thank You!

Thank you for taking the time to complete this training. If you have any questions or comments, please email us at schoolresources@psu.edu.

Proceed to the next training

Click on the link below to move on to the next training titled *Risk Factors of Student Suicide.* In this training, you will increase your confidence in your ability to respond appropriately to the possible outcomes on the suicide risk screening tool.

https://learning.militaryfamilies.psu.edu/school-resources/modules/suicide_10-risk-factors-of-student-suicide_201022/

Return to the module directory

Click on the link below to return to the module directory.

https://schoolresources.militaryfamilies.psu.edu/modules/