Project CRATERS
Creating Responsive Action Through Empowering Resources & Strategies

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CPH: 3999: Undergraduate Research Experience in Public Health

Introduction

Youth today experience a myriad of mental health issues and disorders.

- One in six youth living in the U.S. from 6-17 years of age will face a mental health disorder annually.[2]
- Suicide is the second leading cause of death for those in the U.S. between 10-14 years of age. [2]
- ½ of lifetime mental disorders are present in indiivuals by the age of 14. [2]
- The average time between the onset of mental health disorder symptoms and treatment is around 11 years. [2]

Purpose

- Develop and implement a new evidence-based intervention for teen mental health that is influenced by teens and meant for teens.
- Expand access and types of care available to teens by creating an intervention centered on promotion and prevention.
- End goal: creation of an evidence-based curriculum for teens to improve mental health outcomes
    - Dissemination of resources, knowledge, coping skills, and methods of introspective thinking
- Public health connections:
    - Community and behavioral health: goal of improving the health of Iowa teens
    - Primary prevention focus
    - Holistic view of health (specifically mental health)
    - Qualitative data collection and analysis

Materials & Methods

- Youth Participatory Action Research Project Approach.
- Gaining youth input on the current issues faced by teens, facilitating conversations about what can improve these challenges
    - Monthly meetings with teen board
    - Planned questions, discussions & activities to facilitate different approaches to interventions
    - Participation in and evaluation of current curriculum
- Development of curriculum based on teen input and suggestions
- Dissemination of mental health information and materials through social media
- Creation of four module curriculum and different activities tailored to teens

Data Collection

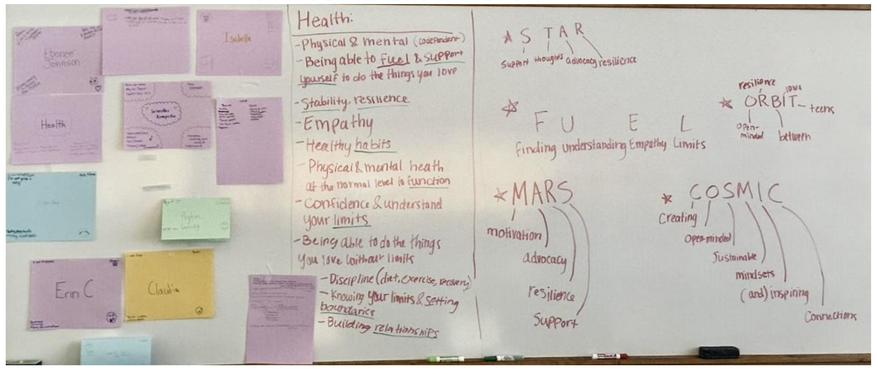

Figure 1: a whiteboard activity from a teen monthly meeting creating definitions of health and acronyms related to mental health.

Results

- The curriculum is disseminated in four modules:
- Module 1- It's Okay to Not Be Okay.
    - Core ideas/questions: what is mental health, what is stigma, how can we describe emotions, how can we recognize changes in mental health and wellbeing?
- Module 2- Building Hope, Resilience, and Healthy Habits.
    - What strategies can we use to foster resilience, optimism, self-awareness, and positive coping mechanisms?
- Module 3- Mental Health in Relationships.
    - What ways can we ensure we foster healthy supportive connections? What do these sort of connections look like? Sound like? Feel like?
- Module 4- How to Support Others.
    - Ways to support peers, friends, and others through mental health struggles.

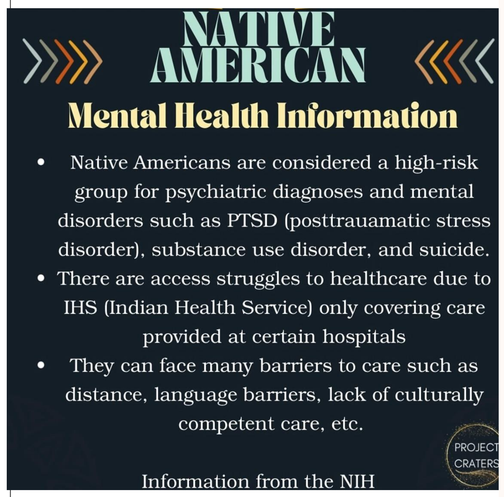

Figure 2: This is a post I created for our Instagram for Native American Heritage Month to disseminate and raise awareness of the disparities in quality and access to mental health care for Native Americans.

Figure 3: Above is a post on our Instagram that detailed five different mental health statistics in Iowa; this specific image is about the percent of youth who have experienced a major depressive episode.

Discussion

- Our project has completed all content of modules 1-4 of our curriculum & we are working on finishing touches and feedback
- First test run of module 1 with a Hawkeye Visit Day group was deemed successful- applied any feedback they had
- Expanded our social media platform- larger audience for dissemination

Conclusion & Future Directions

- The purpose of the project has been achieved: we created a four-module curriculum for teen mental health centered on promotion and prevention
- This experience has changed my view of public health
    - Renewed my passion for advocacy and public health
    - Motivated me to pursue health law and advocate for individuals and their rights
- I learned the importance of advocacy, data dissemination, how a YPAR project is run, qualitative research, and how to build a curriculum
- I will continue my role as a research assistant with this project throughout my undergraduate career and continue working to improve access and quality of mental health care for teens

Acknowledgements

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References

1) "Mental Health of Adolescents." *World Health Organization*, World Health Organization, 10 Oct. 2024, www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/adolescent-mental-health.
2) "Mental Health by the Numbers." *NAMI*, NAMI, Apr. 2023, www.nami.org/about-mental-illness/mental-health-by-the-numbers/.