DEPRESSION AND COLLEGE STUDENTS

A Program Planning Guide

A component of the Mental Health Across the Lifespan Initiative – a public-private partnership between the National Institutes of Health and Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc.
DEPRESSION AND COLLEGE STUDENTS: A PROGRAM PLANNING GUIDE
RECOGNIZING THE SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF DEPRESSION ON COLLEGE CAMPUSES

Program Goals/Objectives:

1. To provide students with information on mental health issues, particularly depression, anxiety, and the prevention of suicide.
2. Increase students’ ability to recognize if they or their peers are in imminent danger (e.g., at risk for suicide).
3. Encourage students to seek help for themselves and their peers.
4. To provide students with on-campus resources where they can receive assistance.
5. To help students identify electronic resources for online screening for a variety of mental health issues, including depression, anxiety, eating disorders, and alcohol and other drug issues.

Target Audience: All undergraduate (and graduate students) on a college campus.

Content: Typical content includes:

- Basic information about depression (and suicide)
- Warning signs that indicate a student may be in imminent danger of suicide
- Appropriate responses when someone is depressed or suicidal
- Help-seeking skills and resources

The following list of event ideas can help in planning an effective Depression Awareness Event. These events provide excellent opportunities to establish partnerships, launch new campaigns and programs, and initiate prevention activities that can continue on your campus throughout the year and beyond. As you get started in planning your events, it is helpful to decide on your goals, as different types of activities can have different results on your campus or in your local community. Choose events and activities that will meet your goals and your campus’s needs and adapt them according to your timeline and resources.

With planning, creativity, and support, great events can come together on short time frames and limited budgets. Remember to consider whether there are activities already happening on your campus and in your community that you can support and promote.

EVENT EXAMPLES

- SET UP AN AWARENESS TABLE: Staff an awareness table on your campus. Decorate your table, and distribute pamphlets, fact sheets, flyers, resources, and giveaways. Engage students in discussion about the signs and symptoms of depression and/or other mental health concerns and where they can seek help.

- CREATE A UNIVERSITY DISPLAY: Approach the campus health service, campus counseling center, cafeteria, residence life and housing, student center, or library about setting up displays or decorating window space related to depression, anxiety, and the prevention of suicide. Use fact sheets, flyers, and/or brochures to decorate the space.
LAUNCH A RESTROOM CAMPAIGN: Take advantage of unused advertising space by placing flyers on the back of restroom stall doors on campus. Remember to ask permission before posting flyers.

SPONSOR A MOVIE SCREENING: Sponsor a movie night on depression, anxiety, or suicide. Know your audience and choose a film to engage their attention. You can pick a film that’s educational, uplifting and engaging. Ask a local expert or panel of experts from the university counseling center, health service, or residence life and housing, or a psychologist or physician from the community to participate by leading the discussion. Ask the expert to talk with the audience about the signs and symptoms of depression, how to recognize when someone is in immediate danger, how to encourage seeking help, and what campus and local resources are available to students. Be sure to have professionals available to provide support to anyone who needs it and hand out information regarding campus and local resources.

HOST A “BREAKFAST WITH” EVENT: Invite a local expert or panel of experts from the university counseling center, health service, or residence life and housing, or a psychologist or physician from the local community to speak about depression, how to recognize when someone is in immediate danger, how to encourage seeking help, and what campus and local resources are available to students. Host the event on campus or ask a local restaurant to provide an organizational discount.

ORGANIZE A GREEN RIBBON CAMPAIGN: Use a green ribbon to create a depression awareness campaign on your campus. When you distribute the ribbons, take the opportunity to share information about the signs and symptoms of depression, how to recognize when someone is in immediate danger, how to encourage seeking help, and what campus and local resources are available to students. Give a brochure or handout along with each ribbon you distribute.

ENGAGE CAMPUS STUDENT ARTISTS
- POETRY OPEN MIC NIGHT: Host an event where poets share their writing about depression, anxiety, or other mental health issues and their recovery or about how mental illness has affected them or someone they know. English and Performing Arts Departments on your campus, coffee houses, or local bookstores may be interested in providing a venue or cosponsoring your event. Invite your local media to advertise and cover the event, or partner with your local radio stations for DJs, judges, and hosts. Collaborate with an English Professor, Performing Arts Professor, Counselor, and/or Physician or Psychologist to coordinate a workshop for students about poetry and/or participation in the arts for healing.
- ESSAY CONTEST: Invite students to write essays about the impact of depression, anxiety, suicide, and other mental health concerns on their lives. Collect, publish, and distribute these stories around your campus. Be sure to request permission from the authors before publishing and/or distributing the essays.
- POSTER CONTEST: Hold a contest for students. Use social networking sites like Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram to promote the contest and announce the winners. Offer prizes to encourage participation. Be sure to request permission from the artists before posting the winning posters.
- ART SHOW: With the permission of the artists, showcase art or photography created by students who have been affected by and/or recovered from...
depression and other mental health disorders. Consider photographs, artwork, jewelry, collages, clothing or other pieces. With the permission of the authors, display the art in a public space on campus. Prominently display brochures and fact sheets for attendees. You can also have an artists’ presentation where participating artists share personal stories of how emotional issues like depression or anxiety have affected them personally or someone they know. Include a professional to talk about the signs and symptoms of depression, how to recognize when someone is in immediate danger, how to encourage seeking help, and what campus and local resources are available to students.

➢ OFFER A CAMPUS PRESENTATION: Partner with the university counseling center, health service, or residence life and housing, or invite a psychologist or physician from the local community to speak about depression, how to recognize when someone is in immediate danger, how to encourage seeking help, and what campus and local resources are available to students. Distribute fact sheets, pamphlets, and brochures about depression, anxiety, and suicide to participants. You might also plan a presentation in conjunction with National Depression Screening Day (October 8).

EXAMPLES OF RESOURCES

➢ CAMPUS AND LOCAL RESOURCES
  o Campus Health Service
  o Campus Counseling Center/Psychological Services
  o University Department of Residence Life and/or Housing
  o Division of Campus Life/Student Services
  o Local Hospitals, Health Departments, Physicians’ Offices

➢ NATIONAL RESOURCES
  o The National Institute of Mental Health is an institute of the National Institutes of Health. The NIMH website provides extensive information on mental health, including depression, anxiety, and suicide, as well as related research and prevention efforts.
  o The NIMH Outreach Partnership Program works to increase the public’s access to science-based mental health information through partnerships with national and state organizations. Fifty-five Outreach Partners in every state, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico conduct outreach activities on mental health issues and distribute educational materials to the public throughout their states and local communities.
  o National Organizations: The following organizations provide science-based information about mental illnesses and mental health and have broad reach throughout states and local communities.
    ▪ Active Minds, Inc. Active Minds empowers students to change the perception about mental health on college campuses.
    ▪ Mental Health America is a national community-based non-profit organization dedicated to helping all Americans achieve wellness by living mentally healthier lives.
NAMI, the National Alliance on Mental Health, is the nation’s largest grassroots mental health organization dedicated to building better lives for the millions of Americans affected by mental illness.

- The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline can connect you to a local crisis line 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. 1-800-273-TALK (8255)

**FEATURED PUBLICATIONS**

- *Depression and College Students* Many people experience the first symptoms of depression during their college years. This booklet describes what depression is, how it affects college students, and treatment options.
- *Depression Booklet* A detailed booklet that describes depression symptoms, causes, and treatments, with information on getting help and coping
- *Depression Brochure* A brochure on depression that explains what it is and how to get help.
- *Women and Depression: Discovering Hope* A booklet that describes the symptoms, treatment and factors contributing to depression that are unique to women.
- *Men and Depression* Men and women may experience depression very differently. This brochure describes common signs and symptoms, and treatment options for depression in men.
- *Suicide in America: Frequently Asked Questions* A brief overview of the statistics on depression and suicide with information on depression treatments and suicide prevention.
- *Suicide: A Major, Preventable Mental Health Problem* Facts about suicide prevention among teens and young adults.