The Power of Screening

Mental health screenings are informational, not diagnostic. Diagnoses, treatment recommendations and opinions should not be given. The goal of the screening is to identify students with symptoms consistent with depression and/or suicidality and to advise a complete professional evaluation.

SOS Signs of Suicide Prevention Program and Screening

The SOS Signs of Suicide Prevention Program contains three key components:

- An educational DVD and guided discussion with students
- The Brief Screen for Adolescent Depression- a validated depression screening tool
- Student Response Cards indicating whether a student would like to speak to a trusted adult about themselves or a friend

SOS is included in SAMHSA’s National Registry of Evidence-Based Programs and Practices (NREPP).

In order to implement the evidence-based SOS program with fidelity, the educational component, screening and student response card are necessary.

In a randomized controlled study published in BMC Public Health, 2007 found SOS to be associated with:

- significantly greater knowledge
- more adaptive attitudes about depression and suicide
- 40% fewer suicide attempts among intervention youths relative to untreated controls (Aseltine, 2007)

All documented program results are based on implementation of the educational component, the screening and the student response card.

Screening Tool and Student Response Card

My school uses student response cards to identify students who would like to speak to a trusted adult. Won’t students self-refer if they are suffering from depression?

Screening for Mental Health collects data from schools implementing SOS around the nation. Many schools report identifying students in need of immediate intervention who have replied “no” on their student response cards but scored very high on the BSAD. When school staff followed up based on the BSAD scores, they learned that some of these students had active suicide plans and required hospitalization.

Only 15-20% of students identified for follow-up in one large metropolitan area were self-referred through the student response card.

If my school use the BSAD, should I still use the Student Response Card?

Yes, when schools use both the BSAD and the Student Response Card, the number of students identified for follow-up increases.

"The Student Response Card is very important. Several students in each class checked that they needed to talk, some we had not suspected as at-risk. They may have gone on living with these feelings for a long time if we didn’t do this. Through the screening, students take the information and relate it to themselves.” - K. Lyons- SOS Program Implementer
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Screening Case Examples

High School 1
516 freshmen received all 3 components of SOS
78 students (15%) were identified for follow up
  66 identified through the BSAD
  12 identified through Student Response Card

High School 2
271 students received all 3 components of SOS
43 students (16%) identified for follow up by priority level:
  11 identified as Priority 1
    (answered “yes” to questions 4 and/or 5 on the BSAD)
  20 identified as Priority 2
    (answered “no” to questions 4/5 but had 4 or more Yes’s on the BSAD)
  12 identified as Priority 3
    (“yes” on the response card but had scores of 3 or under on the BSAD)

Student Follow up/Referral Data from Large Metropolitan area:

Thank you to our Chicago-based partner, Elyssa’s Mission for providing the data listed here.