

BEST PRACTICES IN CAMPUS SUICIDE PREVENTION: HIGHLIGHTING ASK.LISTEN.REFER. SUICIDE PREVENTION TRAINING FOR MISSOURI CAMPUSES

Partners in Prevention (PIP) is a statewide coalition dedicated to creating healthy and safe college campuses in Missouri. PIP is especially concerned with decreasing student suicide across college campuses. In January 2009, PIP launched an online suicide prevention training program called Ask Listen Refer (ALR) with funding from the Missouri Foundation for Health. ALR is specifically designed for college campuses and focuses on prevention of suicide and bystander intervention. Below are the best practices for utilizing the training.

DISCUSSION

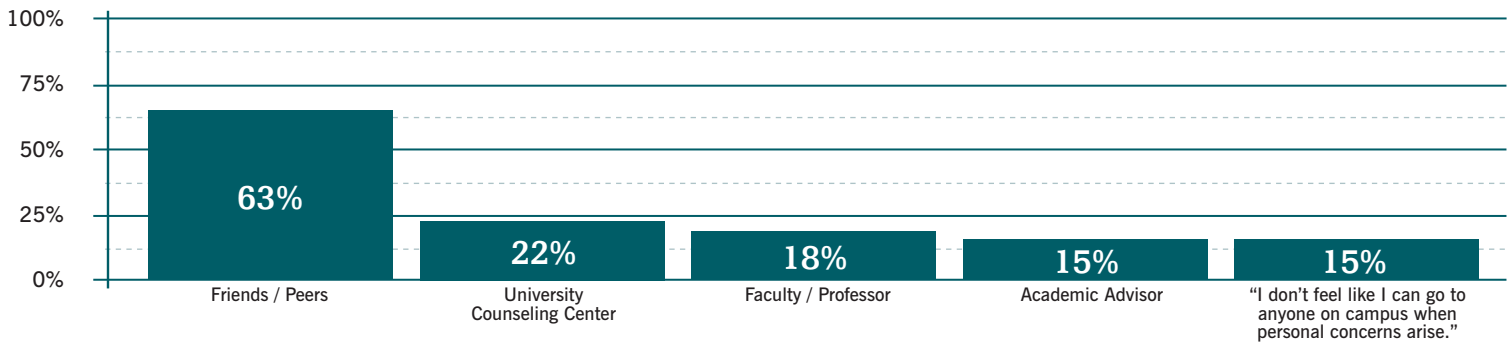
According to the National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, suicide is the second leading cause of death among college-age youth. Campuses have growing concerns about the mental health of students and the possibility of suicide on campus. Efforts to train non-clinical personnel at college campuses on suicide risk detection, intervention, and referral have been historically limited to in-person classes and presentations which only reach those who attend and, because of lack of follow-up, have limited long-term impact on attendees. In addition, in-person training programs are dependent on staff time and resources

and can only provide training to a limited number of participants.

In 2009, the Pew Internet & American Life Project reported that almost 20% of youth 12-17 searched for information online about health topics that are difficult to discuss, like drug use, sexual health, or depression. The 2013 Missouri College Student Health Behavior Survey also revealed that when a personal concern arose, 63% of students turned to their friends/peers for help first.

Therefore, it is extremely critical to identify a programming method, such as an online training, that educates a large number of college students using a method that they are comfortable with, such as the internet.

To whom could you go to when a personal concern arises?



ASK LISTEN REFER: A PROMISING PRACTICE FOR SUICIDE PREVENTION

The ALR Training program is an online training, designed for students, faculty, staff and parents at colleges in Missouri. The program currently serves over 30 campuses in Missouri and several campuses outside of the state of Missouri. Sites are customized to each campus and include individual logins for participants. During the 20 minute training program, participants learn about signs

and symptoms of suicidal behavior, common myths about suicide, how to ask if someone is considering suicide, and how to refer someone that needs help. Participants are given a pre- and post-test and have the opportunity to take follow-up surveys at 3, 6 and 12 months to assess the overall use of the program.

Data from ALR participants suggest that ALR is a promising practice to teach students, faculty, and staff about how to help a friend or student who may be considering suicide.

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The ALR Training is considered a promising suicide prevention program because:

- » **Availability:** the training is available online, free to all students, faculty and staff and can be re-visited for reference at a later date.
- » **Education:** trainees have the ability to review definitions, information and videos that will instruct them on helping friends and peers.
- » **Individualization** for each college campus so that resources within the training are local and familiar to students.

Overall, users of the ALR training find the program to be user-friendly and provide information that they have not received in another format. Many users report never attending a workshop about suicide prevention. In a survey of users from Missouri's colleges and universities in July 2012, 81% of consumers had **never** attended a workshop or suicide prevention training prior to going through ALR and 53% of individuals taking ALR had never been through any sort of suicide prevention training before.

SUMMARY

The majority of students feel that they have someone they can talk to when something is concerning them; however, there are a number of students who feel that they have no one. Since students turn to their friends/peers first, educating students should be a priority of each college campus. Campuses should continue to advertise ALR, as well as other mental health services. Some ways to do this include:

- » Partnering with professors who will offer class credit for completion of the training program.
- » Require student organization leaders to take the training.
- » Host a mental health day focusing on stress reduction and self-care utilizing the ALR promotional items and emphasizing the training.

Report prepared by Kimi Nolte, Partners in Prevention Suicide Prevention Staff

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