

Sense of Belonging and Intervention Behaviors

Partners in Prevention (PIP) is Missouri's higher education substance misuse consortium dedicated to creating healthy and safe college campuses. This year, the coalition comprises 25 public and private colleges and universities throughout Missouri. 24 of those have data included in the 2023 Missouri Assessment of College Health Behaviors (MACHB) survey. PIP member campuses work to prevent high-risk behaviors by implementing evidence-based strategies. To measure progress and obtain data needed for the implementation of programs, PIP created the MACHB Survey. The MACHB is an annual, online survey that has been implemented each spring since 2007. The survey assesses the roles that alcohol, drugs (illegal and prescription), tobacco/nicotine, interpersonal violence, and mental health have on student health and wellness.

Background

Sense of belonging is measured by the MACHB because it can be an indicator of student wellness, success, and retention. Feelings of connectedness and having strong relationships can also be a protective factor for violence (Wilkins et al., 2014). According to the 2023 MACHB, about two-thirds of Missouri college students feel they have a sense of belonging on their campus (66%). Sense of belonging was measured on a Likert scale with the options strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree, and strongly disagree. Strongly agree and agree will be represented as the student feels a sense of belonging and strongly disagree and disagree will be represented as the student does not feel a sense of belonging. Neither disagree nor agree will not be represented.

Engage and Intervention Behaviors

Engage is a multi-level violence prevention program created by Missouri Partners in Prevention with support from the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services Office on Women's Health in collaboration with the Missouri Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence. Engage frames intervention behaviors

within the context of community connection and sense of belonging. The program focuses on encouraging a culture of care on campus and increase the desire and willingness to prevent (or respond to) potentially harmful situations.

Based on results from the 2021 Campus Culture and Bystander Engagement Survey, the Engage program intentionally does not use the word 'bystander'. Overall, students have a negative association with the term 'bystander', and while it has been used historically in other violence prevention programs, Engage uses the term 'engaged community member'. This term as well as 'intervention behaviors' will be used throughout the brief to remain consistent with the language in Engage.

Intervention Behaviors

Students were asked about their intervention behaviors and which specific situations they had witnessed at their school in the past year regarding acts of bias/discrimination, acts of interpersonal violence, substance use behaviors, and/or concerning mental health issues of a peer. The top three situations that

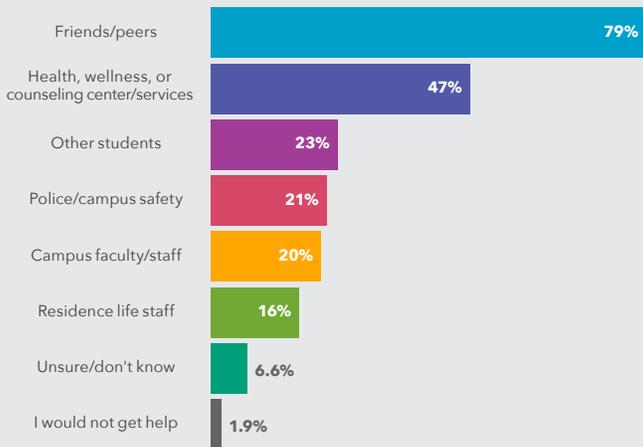
Table 1: Top Three Situations Witnessed

Alcohol or Drug Use Behaviors		Acts of Bias/ Exclusion/ Discrimination		Acts of Interpersonal Violence		Peer's Mental Health Behaviors	
Blacking out/ passing out from drinking or substance use	30%	Jokes or comments made about group stereotypes	42%	Abusive relationships	13%	Not going to class	36%
Driving after drinking or substance use	24%	Making stereotyped assumptions about someone	29%	Stalking	10%	Pulling away from friends or activities	34%
Hazing or pressuring someone to drink or use substances	13%	Teasing someone in a way that reflects group stereotypes	27%	Non-consensual sexual contact	10%	Experiencing a mental health crisis	29%

students reported they witnessed are represented in Table 1. Students were then asked where they would go to get help for the previous situations. 78.9% of students endorsed that they would go to friends/peers for help (Chart 1). This response indicates students feel the most comfortable with their peers in a potentially harmful situation.

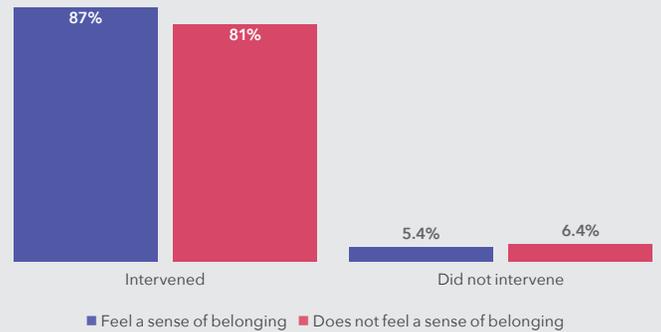
of being harmed to a resource, and following up after the situation had occurred. Students who feel a sense of belonging were more likely to have intervened than students who did not feel a sense of belonging, and conversely students who did not feel a sense of belonging were more likely to have not intervened (Chart 2).

Chart 1: If you were to get help for any of the previous situations, where would you go?*



*Check all that apply

Chart 2: Intervention by Sense of Belonging



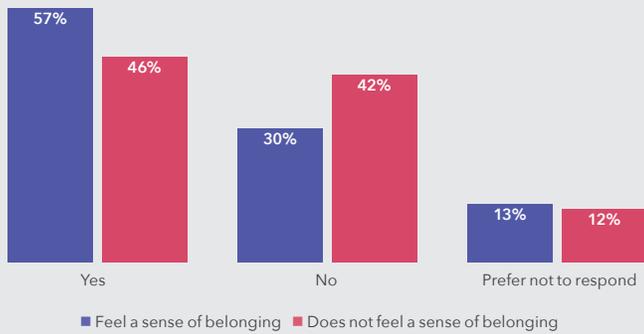
Sense of Belonging and Intervention in a Potentially Harmful Situation

Students who witnessed potentially harmful situations were asked if they did or did not intervene. Intervention could include acting directly, enlisting others for help, creating a distraction, referring the individual at risk

Suicide Prevention Training

39% of Missouri college students reported that they were concerned about a friend showing suicidal thoughts or behaviors in the past 12 months. Students were then asked about their willingness to complete an online suicide prevention training that was specialized in detection, intervention, and referral for friends at risk of suicide. Students who reported feeling a sense of belonging (Chart 3) indicated they would be more willing to complete an online suicide prevention training (57%) than students who reported that they did not feel a sense of belonging (46%).

Chart 3: Willingness to Complete Online Suicide Prevention Training by Sense of Belonging



Summary

Sense of belonging is an important indicator of student success and wellness, and it could also indicate a student's willingness to intervene in a potentially harmful situation. Increasing the number of students who feel a sense of belonging on their campus could help prevent violence because students will feel more connected to each other. Campuses should implement strategies to help their students feel a sense of belonging.

Resources

Engage

Engage is a multi-level violence prevention strategy aimed at creating a culture of care on Missouri college campuses. It was designed to encourage community connectedness. The core issues Engage focuses on are alcohol and other drug use, bias and discrimination, interpersonal violence, and mental health and suicide. Sense of belonging is a

contributing factor to community connectedness, so Engage could be helpful if used with other strategies designed to target increasing feelings of belonging for students. More information about Engage can be found at mopip.org/engage.

Ask. Listen. Refer. Training

Ask. Listen. Refer. is a free, statewide online suicide prevention training program that is designed to train and educate students, faculty, staff, and other members of college and university campuses across Missouri in the skills to identify people at risk of suicide, recognize risk factors and warning signs, and get help for the people at risk. Learn more at asklistenrefer.org.

Students in Distress Videos

These short videos can help individuals learn how to navigate difficult conversations with students who may need help. They are available to any member of the campus community at mopiptraining.org.

MOSafeRx Training

Learn how to recognize the signs of prescription drug misuse, respond to opioid overdose, and provide resources to someone in need. Take the training at mopiptraining.org/msrx.

Contact Partners in Prevention at (573) 884-7551.

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Citations

1. Wilkins, N., Tsao, B., Hertz, M., Davis, R., Klevens, J. (2014). Connecting the Dots: An Overview of the Links Among Multiple Forms of Violence. Atlanta, GA: National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Oakland, CA: Prevention Institute.