Virginia County Collaboration Focuses on Mental Health and Resilience in Teenagers

Partners Involved: Fairfax County Public Schools; Fairfax County Health Department; Fairfax Family Practice; INOVA Hospital Department of Pediatrics; Josh Anderson Foundation; Catholic University Department of Psychology; CrisisLink

Description of the Integration: The COMMUNITY OF SOLUTIONS was formed by two parents who were saddened and concerned about recent, local teen suicides. They hoped that people would come together to talk, share ideas and take action. It was launched after the fourth teen suicide in the Woodson High School community, which has since expanded to six. The focus of the organization is action focused on efforts to raise the profile of mental health and resilience, substance use and abuse, and to identify or create community collaboration. The Mission is “to help teens deal with adversity and build resilience through idea and resource sharing between teens, parents and professionals.” Successes of the organization include:

- Training of 50 students in 6 schools in Mental Health First Aid (MHFA), only the second implementation of student training in the US of this international curriculum. The goal was to create peer resources in schools. This was a partnership between the Parent Teacher Student Organization, Josh Anderson Foundation, and the Health Department;
- Securing resources to train teachers, coaches, and athletic trainers in MHFA in all schools, a Fairfax County Public School (FCPS) and Fairfax County Health Department collaboration. This will expand the number of MHFA trainers in the county;
- Student input into clarifying FCPS 'consequences' for seeking mental health help or reporting concerns about friends;
- Training of a Boy Scout’s of America (BSA) leader in MHFA and negotiations with National Capital Area Council of Boy Scouts of America to create training option for Troop leaders. This also includes formation of a 501c3 to fund training;
- Introduction of Patient Health Questionnaire-2 (PHQ-2) screening into school sports physicals. Over 3000 students were screened in the spring;
- 2014 exploration of introduction of Mindfulness for Sports Performance Enhancement (Catholic University research focus) into athletic programs in FCPS. The pilot is in planning stages while exploring funding for a randomized trial, as all suicide victims were athletes. Athletics is also looking for ways to emphasize mentoring, modeling, monitoring, and mindfulness;
- Development of mental health, suicide and resiliency components for a concussion training course required of all parents of athletes;
- Introduction of mindfulness exercises as a routine part of the classroom and after-school programs;
- Implementation of the Virginia Tech program, Pay it Forward, to give students a way to recognize healthy, supportive behavior;
- Student testing of counseling process in seeking help for friends, and feedback to FCPS administration that changed policy advocacy effort to support funding for Health Department funding for mental health services;
- Grand Rounds hosted by Pediatrics and including Family Medicine to make county depression and suicide statistics more apparent, to discuss screening, to identify ways to help health care providers access mental health services, and to challenge clinicians to consider community leadership roles;
- Lectures to family medicine residency about Community of Solutions and their role in community leadership.

**Website Links:** [http://com-sol.wix.com/communityofsolutions](http://com-sol.wix.com/communityofsolutions)

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