

Supporting Youth Mental Health:

An adult volunteer training
program



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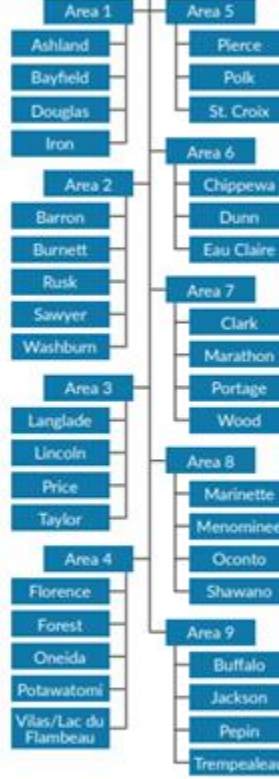
Associate Dean, Agriculture, Natural Resources, & Community Development



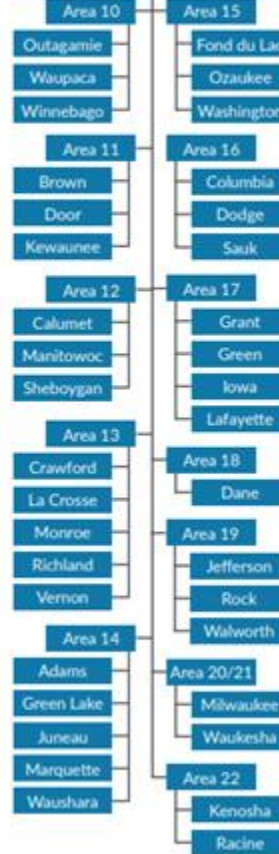
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Updated 1/2024

Youth Mental Health in Wisconsin

- > 1 in 3 students reported symptoms that align with depression
 - 1 in 5 of them received the help they needed
- Decreases in protective factors, school safety, and physical health
- Increase in screen use
- Positive health indicators continue to decline
- 1 in 5 students reported non-suicidal self-harm
- 18.6% of students report seriously considering suicide
- 8.7% of students reporting attempted suicide

Supporting Extension Volunteers

- Understand youth mental health and their role in supporting it
- Promote safe and inclusive environments that support youth mental health, reduce stigma, and increase help-seeking
- Build skills and strategies for preventing crisis situations, building relationships, and communicating nonjudgmentally

Youth Mental Health First Aid

- Evidence-based
- 7.5 hours of curriculum
- Barriers for completion

Supporting Youth Mental Health

- 2 part training - 1 hour online + 2 hour 'live' training
- Flexible offerings
- Co-training model

Developing and Implementing SYMH

- Team of educators, volunteers, and youth
- Engaging, relevant content
- Reference guide
- Co-training model - Positive Youth Development & Health and Well-being



Comparative Evaluation of Youth Mental Health Curricula

Youth Mental Health Comparative Evaluation

Purpose:

- Assess the comparative effectiveness of SYMH & YMHFA in preparing individuals to support youth experiencing mental health challenges
- Understand how participants had used their training since completing SYMH or YMHFA

Methods

Online Qualtrics survey sent to all participants who had completed the SYMH or YMHFA training 3-12 months prior

Survey sent out in September 2022

Sent to 279 program participants

- 99 completed the survey (35% completion rate)

Survey contents

- Participants' beliefs about mental health problems
- Participants' confidence in helping youth experiencing youth mental health challenges
- How participants would respond to a youth experiencing a mental health challenge (using a hypothetical scenario)
- How participants had used their training
- Whether participants felt they had enough support/information to intervene with a youth experiencing a mental health challenge

Evaluation Findings

The background features a series of overlapping, curved shapes. On the left, a large, dark orange shape dominates. To its right, a lighter orange shape overlaps it. Further right, a teal shape overlaps the lighter orange one. On the far right, a bright yellow shape overlaps the teal one. The overall effect is a dynamic, layered composition of warm and cool colors.

Beliefs about Youth Mental Health

Respondents asked ***extent to which they agreed*** with a series of statements on youth mental health beliefs.

Examples:

- Mental health problems are a sign of personal weakness.
- I believe I can do something to help a young person with a mental health challenge.

No significant differences in youth mental health beliefs between those who completed SYMH vs. YMHFA

Changes in Confidence & Behavior

Respondents asked participants ***how likely*** they were to help a young person experiencing a mental health challenge as well as ***how confident*** they were they could help.

- Looked for changes in confidence & behavior from before to after the training

Both SYMH & YMHFA participants reported significant increases in confidence and likelihood to take action after completing the training.

YMHFA saw greater increases, but this difference was only significant for one item.

Use of Mental Health Training

Approximately 60% of respondents had used their YMH training in the past 6 months.

“In general, [the YMH training] has made me more open and a better parent, school employee, and leader.”

“I have learned to listen—it is not always necessary to have an answer but to be a sounding board for the youth.”

“I have been able to notice smaller changes as a sign of needing help vs. thinking they are just having an ‘off’ day.”

“I noticed some changes in mood/behavior and asked some open-ended questions, and then asked if the youth was ‘willing to talk to a person that was trained on how to help people navigate those situations.’ He agreed.”

Additional Support/Information Needed

Respondents asked if they felt they have *enough support/information to intervene* with a youth experiencing a mental health challenge

- Average score of 7.5 (on scale of 0-10)

**No differences between
SYMH & YMHA participants**

- More practice or experience; more confidence
- Additional training or a refresher course
- More community resources/referral options/area professionals with appropriate training or qualifications
- Additional tools/quick reference materials

Conclusions & Implications

Both SYMH & YMHFA resulted in significant increases in confidence helping a youth with a mental health challenge and likelihood to take action to help youth.

SYMH & YMHFA participants felt similarly prepared to support youth in terms of information and support, but both expressed a desire for additional training, experience, and resources.

SYMH appears to be an acceptable training program to prepare adult volunteers to support youth mental health.

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