



**Riverside County Suicide Prevention Coalition
Prevention Sub-Committee – Engaging Schools Workgroup
3/10/2021**

In Attendance:

Kathleen Sarmiento- Chair, Riverside USD
Matthew Fraley– Chair, Riverside USD
Andrea Deaton – PEI Liaison
Melissa Jacks– Clerical Support, RUHS BH PEI
Melissa Coriz, RUHS BH
Sheri Parker, Hemet USD
William Harris, RUHS SAPT
Katie Vazquez, RUHS BH PEI
Bill Schnack, Retired RUSD
Felipe Flores, Lake Elsinore USD
Nicole Watson, Operation Safehouse

Absent:

Alex Engen, RUHS BH
Alyse Michaelis, Reach Out
Anita Shirley, CNUSD
Berenice Zuniga, Sigma Beta Xi
Bettye Turner-January, Black Chamber Perris
Catherine Wuertz, Desert Sands USD
Erika Munoz, YHIP Program
Jessica Oakes, Hemet USD
Lauren Bagwell, Hemet USD
Lisa Tangler, TIP
Lora Rodriguez, Palo Verde USD
Michelle McCarthy, Project 99
Magda Stewart, TIP
Mercedes Sapien, Gateway College and Career Academy
Misty Kerrigan, Oak Grove Center
Nicole Henderson, Banning USD
Rachel Angel, Palo Verde USD
Susan Fleming, Palo Verde USD

Minutes

- I. Welcome & brief self-introductions were made
 - During introductions, Melissa announced that after this meeting, Katie will be taking over support of the clerical duties of the sub-committee.



II. Brief overview of meeting goals

- i. Consistent, standardized and effective implementation of Education Code Section 215 and other mental health policies across districts
- ii. Support implementation of evidence-based strategies such as Social Emotional Learning (SEL) and mindfulness, to enhance youth academic achievement and wellness, decrease risky behaviors, and improve relationships with peers and teachers to increase student engagement and connectedness
- iii. Review existing suicide prevention youth programs and provide a recommended list of districts to facilitate that every school has at least one youth program on campus to increase youth engagement

III. Review Ed Code 215

- Conversation regarding sub-committee having a focus on K – 6 grade and at-risk youth since that is the most recent addition to the ed code.
- Review potential options for of programs to implement and promote to support goals one and two

IV. Review Sandy Hook Promise program Start with Hello which is a program geared at K- 5th

- Free program, just need to register your school / district
- Provide empathy skills training, anti-bullying, increase connections on campus
- Melissa shared that there are a few schools in Riverside County that currently use this program and potentially if this is an option we would like to explore, we can ask them about their experience.
- Andrea shared that her child's school is a listed participant but was not aware that this program was in place.
- Additionally shared that the program is suicide prevention without using the word suicide which may be easier for the teachers to implement.
- Andrea asked if Katie or Melissa can reach out to them to inquire on if they are "evidence-based".
- Start with Hello program is a 45-minute presentation done with teachers in class.
- Andrea asked us to think about how we might present this program to schools and package it so we get their buy in.
- Felipe shared that one challenge with implementing new programs on campus is dealing with the teachers union. Additionally, he shared that in order to get the most "buy in" they will need to get the school leadership excited about it and then filter down to the teachers.
- Sheri suggested that the program is brought to the person in charge of student support services at the site and present it with a focus on how it would be most beneficial for students and teachers. Showing the schools that with implementing, they will be following ed code.



- Sheri also shared that in her experience schools don't always know how to address mental health and once you tie it in with an ed code, however, they will do whatever they need to do to avoid litigation.
- Felipe shared that conversations right now are all surrounding how to support students when they return to campus. So, now is a great time to start introducing programs like this because it's on everyone's mind.
- Bill asked if the ed code focuses on more training for social emotional learning for students to recognize isolation in their peers and identifying someone that might feel alone. In his experience, most individuals that have died by suicide are the ones that are socially isolated and are the students that do not belong to any groups. He sees how important it is for the students to come back on campus and all be part of a group and feel like they belong. The key to suicide prevention is by recognizing how we are engaging everyone to feel like they belong in a group.
- Matthew addressed that counselors are responsible to inform staff about Trauma Informed practices and wishes they had more time to address with teachers. Suggests that we put something into place on campus that is ongoing mental health support and not just a 20-minute presentation then it is over.

V. Reviewed BARR program

- Matthew noted that were made aware of this program from Jessica Oakes with Taquitz High
- Sheri gave a brief overview of the program since all Hemet high schools have this program on campus with all freshman students.
- The program aides in identifying students who may not be on anyone's radar when it comes to needing support.
- Hemet implemented this program after applying for a grant and using the program as a trial. The program was so successful that they brought it on all high school campuses.
- Each school has a designated BARR therapist on campus that follows and supports the students.
- After freshman year, if a student is still needing support the BARR program counselor will notify the general education therapist since the BARR program is only for freshman year.
- Melissa noted that when reaching out to the company, the representative said that they can schedule a presentation to share more info with our sub-committee. We would just need to schedule, when we are ready.
- Felipe noted which Riverside County schools were listed on the BARR program website
- Sheri said that San Diego school district seems to be at the forefront of implementing SEL programs on campus and asked the committee if we would like her to connect to some of her contacts to find out which programs they use.



- Kat responded, yes would like her to connect and provide us with that information.
- Conversation regarding trainings that are mandatory for staff prior to the start of a school year and whether or not we can possibly include training regarding suicide prevention.
- Felipe shared concerns with that training being a self-guided virtual training and not getting the attention it needs.
- Sheri mentioned that perhaps this training can be part of the professional development training.

VI. Kat shared information about programs a student is part of (Gen Up & Riverside County Youth Council) where the students work to help get bills passed with the state in regards to mental health.

- Kat shared what the group is currently working on assembly bills that address the following:
 - Mental Health day for students that does not count against attendance.
 - Students 10th -12th grade receive training on recognizing signs and symptoms of a mental health disorder.
 - Requires training for district staff working with students grade 10th-12th from evidence-based programs on recognizing and providing referrals for students needing mental health services, substance abuse services, or other supports.
 - Require student health centers on campuses that are identified with high rates of suicide.
- Kat asked if the committee would like to invite these students to attend our next meeting to collaborate.
 - Committee collectively responded yes.
- Sheri asked if the committee is aware of California department of education or project Cal Well and their workgroups and shared she will try to get committee members added to an email list that shares upcoming legislature for mental health.

VII. Melissa shared responses of school survey regarding suicide prevention in place within the school districts.

VIII. Next Meeting: Wednesday, April 14th, 2021 at 3:00pm – 4:30pm