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Youth Mental Health Awareness, Hillsborough County, FL

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COUN 6785: Social Change in Action:
Prevention, Consultation, and Advocacy

Social Change Portfolio

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OVERVIEW

Keywords: Youth Mental Health Awareness, Hillsborough County, FL

Goal Statement: This social change portfolio aims to increase awareness of youth mental health and provide resources for easy access to mental health services, ultimately improving the psychological health outcomes of young people in Hillsborough County.

Significant Findings: Numerous adolescents in Hillsborough County report experiencing symptoms of depression, anxiety, and thoughts of suicide. The youths also lack mental health awareness and assistance access. The portfolio suggests increasing mental health resources, school-based programs, and mental health awareness campaigns to address these issues.

Objectives/Strategies/Interventions/Next Steps:

1. Collaborate with local mental health clinics to provide low-cost or free assistance to at-risk adolescents. Promote these services with community groups.
 2. Establish school-based mental health programs that screen, assess, and refer pupils to needed assistance. Develop and administer these programs with administrators, counselors, and instructors.
 3. Encourage youth and family mental health awareness initiatives. Promote mental health awareness and education through local media.
 4. Create a neighborhood youth advisory council to advise mental health activities.
 5. Create a comprehensive assessment plan for the portfolio's recommendations, including monitoring mental health resource use and outcomes for Hillsborough County youth.
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INTRODUCTION

Youth Mental Health Awareness

The objective of this social change portfolio is to address the psychological health concerns among young people in Hillsborough County, FL. Challenges surrounding emotional health issues like stress, gloominess, and self-destructive thoughts are prevailing among adolescents. The distressing effect of these difficulties can disrupt the all-inclusive well-being of teenage pupils, hindering their academic, communal, and individual lives. The collection outlines plans to increase awareness of psychological health among children between the ages of 13-17. Resources to further promote youth mental health agenda will be identified, paving the way for easy access to mental health services. The portfolio stands to enhance the psychological health outcomes of the youth while also lowering the incidence of psychological health-related predicaments in the vicinity.

PART 1: SCOPE AND CONSEQUENCES

Youth Mental Health Awareness

Target Problem

The target problem for this portfolio is mental health concerns among the youth in Hillsborough County. Mental health challenges such as depression, anxiety, and suicidal thoughts are prevalent among teenagers in the community.

Scope of the Problem

As per the American Community Survey in 2018, around 1.4 million people reside in Hillsborough County, placing it fourth in rank in Florida's populated counties (University of Florida, 2022). The absence of well-documented data about the youth's instances of mental

health disorders in Hillsborough County is noticeable. Nonetheless, the National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH) of 2019 indicates that roughly 11.4% of 12-17-year-old youngsters in Florida reported undergoing a major depressive episode within the past year, which is marginally higher than the national standard of 10.7% (SAMHSA, 2020). Furthermore, Stone et al. (2021) provide evidence that the rate of suicide among individuals aged 10-24 years in Hillsborough County accounts for 9.1 out of 100,000 residents in 2019, exceeding the state rate of 8.4 per 100,000 population.

Consequences of the Problem

The results of mental health problems for young individuals in Hillsborough, which are notably significant, can lead to various physical health problems like self-harm, drug abuse, as well as suicide. They can also cause negative effects in one's family, social and educational life. Furthermore, the limited availability of mental healthcare services may take a toll on the economy through higher healthcare expenses and lost productivity. The consequences of this issue extend beyond individual cases and impact the whole community, leading to lower productivity and higher healthcare expenses.

The Goal Statement For This Social Change Portfolio

The goal is to increase mental health awareness among children ages 13-17 by identifying resources to advocate for mental health for the youth in Tampa, Florida.

PART 2: SOCIAL-ECOLOGICAL MODEL

Youth Mental Health Awareness

Overview

The social-ecological model is a framework that acknowledges how different factors are linked to individual and community health results. When addressing the community issue of mental health for young people, it's essential to tackle risk and protective factors at multiple levels of the model. At the individual level, things like coping skills and genetics can impact mental health. At the relationship level, family discord and positive peer connections can be important. Meanwhile, community-level factors like access to mental health services and nurturing school environments, as well as broader societal factors like structural discrimination and social stigma, can also have an impact on young people's mental health. To comprehensively address mental health concerns for young people, it's necessary to take a holistic approach that considers all levels of the social-ecological model.

Risk and Protective Factors at the Individual Level

The social-ecological model has different levels, including the individual level, which plays a significant role in influencing the mental health outcomes of youth (Saul-Mcleod. 2023). Personal characteristics and behaviors within this level can either be risk or protective factors affecting youth's mental health. Risk factors may include genetics, pre-existing conditions, and past traumatic experiences. Conversely, protective factors can consist of positive self-esteem, strong coping skills, and the ability to manage stress well. Scientific studies show that protective factors can help mitigate the impact of risk factors and promote positive mental health outcomes for youth. For example, Masselink and his colleagues (2018) conducted a study and found that a youth with positive self-esteem during adolescence has a greater likelihood of avoiding depression and anxiety in young adulthood. It's therefore essential to address both risk and protective factors at the individual level to ensure promoting mental health and well-being in youth.

Risk and Protective Factors at the Relationship Level

Interactions with those closest to us can have an impact on mental health outcomes for young people, as part of the social-ecological model. Risk factors at this level may include family disputes, harmful relationships, and lack of social support (CDC, 2022). Conversely, protective factors may include a close-knit family, supportive peers, and healthy romantic relationships. Studies have found that nurturing relationships can improve youth mental health. For example, research by Beckman and Hellström (2022) discovered that positive relationships with parents and peers were associated with lower anxiety and depression among Swedish teens. Thus, addressing factors affecting relationships is essential when it comes to promoting positive mental health outcomes among youth..

Risk and Protective Factors at the Community Level

The socio-ecological model investigates the ways in which a young person's biological and social environments interact to shape his or her psychological well-being. At this stage, dangers like as poverty, lack of access to mental health care, and potentially dangerous environments are already prevalent. Supportive educational environments, recreational programs, mental health services, and community cohesion are all examples of protective variables that can improve young people's mental health outcomes (SAMHSA, n.d.). There is empirical proof that community-level protective factors can improve young people's mental health. A study by Fazel and coworkers (2014), for instance, demonstrated that such programs alleviate depressive and anxious feelings in students. Consequently, promoting healthy mental health outcomes in kids necessitates addressing risk and protective variables at the community level.

Risk and Protective Factors at the Societal Level

The societal level of the social-ecological model includes factors at the macro-level that may impact mental health outcomes for youth. Risk factors at this level may include systemic racism, social stigma surrounding mental health, and inadequate access to healthcare. Protective factors at this level may include policies promoting equity, public awareness campaigns aimed at reducing stigma, and comprehensive mental health services. Research has shown that addressing societal-level risk factors is essential for promoting positive mental health outcomes for youth. For instance, a study by Van Ryzin et al. (2018) found that policies aimed at reducing poverty and promoting access to healthcare can have a significant impact on the mental health of children and youth. Therefore, addressing societal-level risk and protective factors is critical for promoting positive mental health outcomes in youth.

Conclusion

To sum up, the social-ecological approach sheds light on the various factors that impact the emotional stability of young individuals. From genetics and preexisting ailments to family issues and supportive friendships, mental health treatments and the school environment, and other elements such as institutionalized discrimination and policies that foster impartiality - all of these can be identified as risk and protective factors at every level. If we aspire to help young people attain optimal mental health and well-being, we must work on all of these fronts. This framework should serve as a blueprint for everyone - from individuals and community organizations to lawmakers - working towards enhancing the emotional well-being of young people. By addressing both the negative and positive aspects they encounter, we can ensure positive mental health outcomes for our young individuals.

PART 3: THEORIES OF PREVENTION

Youth Mental Health Awareness

The application of social cognitive theory and Communication theory can play a crucial role in preventing mental health issues, particularly depression and suicidal thoughts, among youths aged 13-17 years in Hillsborough County. National Cancer Institute (2005) states that Social Cognitive Theory(SCT) posits that environmental factors, cognitive processes, imitation, and modeling influence behavior. The theory highlights the significance of social interaction and an individual's active role in acquiring new behaviors. This theory proposes that individuals can employ self-reflection and self-regulation to identify the most favorable course of action for their mental health. Therefore, by providing youths with appropriate role models, they can be encouraged to develop healthy coping mechanisms and increase their resilience in managing mental health issues.

On the other hand, communication theory perceives communication as the foundation for comprehending and shaping behavior. It suggests that effective communication can assist individuals in better comprehending their own emotions and the emotions of others. National Cancer Institute (2005) shows that communication is crucial for individuals to become aware of the resources available to them and to receive support from others. By adopting and implementing this theory, individuals and society can create a more holistic approach to mental health prevention for youths in Hillsborough County. Therefore, communication theory equips the Hillsborough community with communication skills for creating awareness of mental health problems among the youths.

The two theories fit the target population, as they center around the crucial role of social interaction and communication in comprehending and shaping behavior. This can be especially valuable in identifying significant signs of mental health struggles, like depression and suicidal ideation, and being informed about the resources at your disposal. Also, social cognitive and communication theories emphasize the power of introspection and self-control, which can be instrumental in cultivating healthier coping mechanisms and proactively addressing mental health concerns.

Research has shown that social cognitive and communication theories can effectively prevent mental health issues. Dawkins, Hasking, and Boyes (2022) researched the interaction between self-efficacy to resist Non-Suicidal Self Injury(NSSI). The researchers conducted questionnaires to college students above 17 years old and found that self-efficacy is among the best protective strategies against NSSI. The findings support applying social cognitive theory to coping strategies related to NSSI and increasing their self-efficacy in managing stress. Cognitive restructuring is an essential technique in social cognitive theory that can be applied in NSSI due to self-efficacy. The technique involves challenging and replacing negative thoughts with more positive thoughts among the youths. Another study by Ruben (2016) shows that communication theory can improve patient care and foster communication between patients and healthcare practitioners. It helps the caregivers provide more knowledgeable and appropriate information concerning preventive measures for certain health problems, such as mental health.

The evidence-based program for this target population is the Guide to Community Preventive Services (The Community Guide), developed by the Community Preventive Services Task Force. This program is designed to create awareness of mental health problems among young people aged 13-24 and equip them with the skills to support their mental well-being. The

Community Guide (2023) program uses a range of activities, such as issuing recommendations and findings based on evidence from community guide systematic reviews, to educate young people about mental health, increase their understanding of mental health issues, and provide them with the skills needed to develop positive coping strategies.

Therefore, social cognitive and communication theories can be crucial in preventing mental health issues such as suicidal ideation and stress. The social cognitive theory highlights the importance of social interactions and posits that imitations and role modeling shape behaviors. The community can create a role model for their youths to prevent the negative behaviors which trigger mental complications. They can also communicate with them and create awareness of the best solutions to control the problem. Additionally, evidence-based programs can help disseminate information regarding mental health to the youths.

PART 4: DIVERSITY AND ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Youth Mental Health Awareness

The rates of mental health problems among adolescents in the United States are raising more concerns, especially among teenagers from minority groups. Fan et al. (2022) researched ethnic and racial discrepancies in national trends, causes of major depressive episodes, and mental health services use in American teenagers. Mental disorders are mainly triggered by substance abuse and other risk factors, such as discrimination based on race. The findings show that the prevalence of MDE with severe role damage among United States teenagers has amplified. Mental depressive episode-related health services access has remained little from 2010 to 2018. Ethnic and racial minority teenagers were more likely to experience mental problems and inadequate access to mental health services than their white counterparts.

Another study by Perreira, Marchante, and Schwartz (2019) examined the association of Latino youth with drug abuse and mental health problems such as depression and anxiety. Latino youth have increased rates of desperation and alcohol abuse. The findings show that among the Latin youth, 5.7 percent were at risk of depression, 18.87 percent of them had ever abused alcohol, and 8.5 percent of the youths had ever smoked. The rate of substance abuse was triggered by social and economic factors, discrimination based on race, and family conflicts.

The mechanisms that can be used to raise the cultural significance of a prevention program with adolescents in minority groups include; establishing strong relationships with community stakeholders. This is essential for creating an effective and culturally relevant prevention program and involves connecting with organizations, activists, government officials, and other individuals within the target population's community. By building these relationships, professionals will gain access to information about local customs which they can use as part of their programming strategy. Another mechanism is incorporating storytelling into educational materials. Storytelling allows those involved in providing education on mental health problems due to substance abuse to relate better with adolescents from marginalized communities by talking about personal stories or experiences related to this issue. Additionally, providing experiential activities during group sessions can be a helpful mechanism. Experiential activities provide youth participants with concrete examples of what substances do physically and mentally so they clearly understand why it is essential not to make bad decisions when engaging in risky behaviors due to peer pressure or environmental influences.

The Code of Ethics relevant to this profession is the Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct. According to this code, it is essential for psychologists and other mental health professionals working in prevention programming to ensure that their work adheres to

principles such as stakeholder collaboration, informed consent, confidentiality, and professional responsibility. Stakeholder collaboration is the professional's commitment to forming strong relationships with community stakeholders, increasing trust between them and their target populations. Informed consent requires that clients are aware of potential risks or benefits associated with any form of intervention provided by the practitioners so they can make an informed decision about participating in therapy or program sessions. Confidentiality implies respecting client privacy when discussing sensitive materials within group settings while ensuring that no information shared during these meetings gets disclosed outside without explicit permission from those involved. According to Lambdin-Pattavina(2019), professionals must also adhere closely to standards set by applicable laws governing research on humans as well as ethical guidelines outlined by organizations such as SAMHSA (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration) for providing accurate, evidence-based services without bias or discrimination towards vulnerable groups such as adolescents from marginalized communities.

PART 5: ADVOCACY

Youth Mental Health Awareness

Advocacy holds significant importance in tackling issues faced by communities. It paves the way for positive changes by affecting public policies, institutional approaches, and community mindsets. This essay will explore the obstacles encountered in dealing with specific community issues across the institutional, community, and public policy levels and recommend advocacy measures for overcoming these challenges.

Barriers to Addressing Targeted Community Problems

As per the Multicultural and Social Justice Counseling Competencies (MSJCC) guidelines, numerous challenges exist when addressing specific community problems at the institutional, community, and public policy levels (Leibowitz-Nelson et al., 2020). The institutional level consists of organizations like schools, workplaces, and healthcare centers. On the other hand, the community level pertains to socio-cultural factors that contribute to community issues. While the public policy level relates to laws, regulations, and policies impacting communities.

Inadequate funding, a scarcity of resources, and reluctance to change all contribute to institutional problems. Financial constraints may make it difficult for a school to provide mental health assistance to anxious and depressed students. Community-level barriers include deep-rooted cultural beliefs, stereotypes, and discrimination. For instance, a neighbourhood might maintain stigmas around mental health problems; hence, individuals may hesitate to seek help.

At the public policy level, problems erupt from limited political resolve, clashing interests, and inadequate resources. Inadequate funding for mental health services may lead to a scarcity of mental health care providers, thereby making it challenging for people to get the help they need.

Advocacy Actions to Address Targeted Community Problems

We must take part in advocacy efforts on institutional, communal, and public policy levels if we are to effectively address particular community challenges. We may advocate for the inclusion of mental health benefits for employees and press for increased financing for mental health services inside institutions. We can also highlight the need to teach students about mental health in school (Payton et al., 2000). More student could potentially be impacted by allowing their peers who have sought mental health help to talk to them about the importance of mental

health. Doing these things will expand access to mental health care while decreasing the stigma surrounding those needing it.

Supporting the incorporation of mental health services into community programming, addressing cultural misconceptions and prejudicial beliefs, and increasing public awareness of mental health issues are all possible through collaborative community efforts. The stigma of mental illness can be reduced, and care made more accessible if certain measures are taken.

In conclusion, when it comes to public policy, our advocacy efforts can focus on lobbying for increased financial backing for mental health research and assistance, arguing for the incorporation of mental health services into healthcare reforms, and stressing the value of mental well-being in public policy conversations. These actions will pave the way to greater access to mental health services while fostering a healthier community overall.

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