

Normalize Help-seeking Behavior

A USC Well-being Collective Toolkit



September 2020

USC Well-being Collective

The USC Well-being Collective harnesses the power of Collective Impact for a variety of distinct and often siloed academic departments, administrative units, recognized student organizations and local non-profits to come together and work with the whole student community towards our common agenda: **strengthening a campus culture driven by student wellbeing.**

This goal is supported by four interrelated strategic goals:

Equity and Inclusion – enhancing the culture of equity and inclusion

Resilience and Thriving – creating a culture where individuals and communities thrive

Alcohol and Other Substance Use – disrupting the culture of at-risk substance use

Consent and Healthy Relationships — fostering a culture of consent and healthy relationships

Introduction

Today, mental health professionals have access to various levels of treatment that can effectively help people with a variety of mental health concerns. Many colleges are going beyond simply providing treatment services by expanding efforts to prevent mental health problems from arising and promote the mental well-being of all students. In other words, they are adopting a public health approach to address the social and environmental risk factors that influence student mental health (Davidson & Locke, 2010; SPRC, 2004). Factors affecting student mental health and ability to thrive can be shaped by individual attitudes and beliefs about mental illness, interpersonal group norms, institutional environments, community access to mental health resources and public policies. With the practice of connecting young people early to mental hygiene skill building, emotional support and treatment, institutions can cultivate a culture where individuals and communities thrive.

Most four-year residential colleges and universities provide at least some counseling services, and many also have established relationships with community providers. More and more community colleges also are strengthening linkages to community mental health services. Nonetheless, even with services readily available, many students who need help are not asking for it directly. For example, only a small number of college students who report being depressed are receiving treatment (Eisenberg et al, 2007a). In addition, counseling center directors report that the vast majority of students who die by suicide are not clients of the counseling center (Gallagher, 2010). Therefore, while increasing access to and providing high-quality mental health treatment services are essential, neither is sufficient to address college student mental health issues if not utilized. Common barriers to care in a university student population include stigma associated with mental illness and lack of knowledge of available services. Normalizing help-seeking is one method of overcoming these barriers. Ideally, students will be comfortable with and knowledgeable about asking for help.

Normalize Help-seeking Behavior

Toolkit Description:

Normalizing help-seeking behavior through mental hygiene de-stigmatization practices and mental hygiene promotion

Strategic Goals:

Equity + Inclusion

Thrive + Mental Health

At-Risk Substance Abuse

Consent + Healthy Relationships

Action Areas:

Building healthy public policy

Creating supportive environments

Strengthening community action

Developing personal skills

Re-orienting all sectors towards prevention

A Toolkit For:

Faculty

Staff

Student

Parent/Guardian

Administrator

Goal

Living in a new environment outside the familiarity of home can create overwhelming and stressful circumstances. College students can greatly benefit from understanding that a certain amount of stress is normal, but that too much stress can be unhealthy and unproductive. Knowing the signs of stress, its causes, and how to manage it can be great tools to promote and preserve good mental health. Normalizing help-seeking behavior in college students is an affirming practice to promote positive mental hygiene practices. This tool is aimed at creating supportive environments both inside and outside the classroom and enhancing student skills in seeking out mental health support. The aim of this strategy is to incorporate and embed mental hygiene knowledge and resources within the classroom, the campus and the student organization experience.

Intended Outcomes

Key Performance Indicators:

- Increase positive mental health

Additional Outcomes:

- Reduce personal and perceived stigma for treatment-seeking (Eisenberg, 2007)

Evidence of Effectiveness

Research indicates normalizing the help-seeking process is a key early intervention step for students experiencing mental illness challenges in college (Eisenberg, 2009). However, strategies to implement this approach have not been widely tested for efficacy. The following implementation resources reflect strategies recommended by experts.

Expert Opinion - Strategies with this rating are recommended by credible, impartial experts but have limited research documenting effects; further research, often with stronger designs, is needed to confirm effects.

Implementation Ideas

For Faculty

Faculty can use classroom syllabus review as an opportunity to verbally highlight support resources, reinforcing the importance of maintaining mental well-being. Self-disclosing about personal experiences with stress and stress management can further normalize help-seeking behavior.

Faculty can communicate out and include as a flyer or take-away school policy statement on academic conduct and support systems, and refer/remind students of the resources

For Staff

Staff can ensure information regarding campus resources for seeking out help are updated each semester and available to students in the form of flyers, take-aways or personal referrals.

Staff can talk about personal experiences with stress or stress management to further normalize help-seeking behavior.

For Students

Student organization leaders can ensure mental health resources on campus are communicated out regularly through meetings and other organizational communication channels. For example, an RSO leader could require/recommend that all members complete the Mental Well-being online course (see below).

Students can encourage peers to explore group therapy and potentially attend with a partner or as a friend group.

Implementation Resources

Mental Well-being Online Course

Created by Everfi and the JED Foundation, this course is available to all members of the USC community. The content and design is geared toward students, but the course provides information that can assist staff, faculty, and administrators as well. The course equips learners with the following skills:

- Reduce the stigma surrounding mental health and promote conversations about well-being
- Introduce strategies for approaching challenges, including self-management, self-advocacy, and building a support system
- Empower learners to support peers in crisis situations
- Connect learners with campus-based support and local resources

Syllabus Resource and Review

USC policy requires inclusion of the Statement on Academic Conduct and Support Systems in course syllabi. However, many syllabi either omit this section or include outdated resource information. It is important for faculty to ensure up-to-date resource information is included in their syllabi, as students often refer to course syllabi throughout the semester.

USC Student Health Counseling & Mental Health Services' Let's Talk

Let's Talk is a structured 30-minute drop-in for individual conversation. As an outreach activity (for staff, faculty or students), it is a good option for students to explore what talk therapy might be like. Students may use it as a consultation, to focus on skill-building, ask questions about services, or share what they are experiencing.

Workshops

Workshops are non-clinical single session instructional classes which are easy and accessible ways to gain information and learn coping skills for managing common concerns.

Group Therapy

Group therapy are weekly meetings sequenced to help members make progress in their individual journey toward desired change.

Ask Ari

Ask Ari features an intelligent agent that engages students in a dialog about well-being issues and then facilitates the use of online educational and self-care strategies to assist these students in increasing their levels of personal functioning. It is also a gateway for students who need additional support, such as counseling or advisement.

KSOM Intranet

A repository for well-being events and resources for the KSOM community of faculty, staff and learners.

Sponsors

JED Foundation

References

Eisenberg, D., Golberstein, E., & Gollust, S. (2007). "Help-Seeking and access to mental health care in a university student population." *Medical Care*, 45(7), 594-601.

Eisenberg, D., Downs, M., & Golberstein, E. (2009). "Stigma and help-seeking for mental health among college students." *Medical Care* 66, 522-541.

Levin, M., Krafft, J., & Levin, C. (2018). "Does self-help increase rates of help seeking for student mental health problems by minimizing stigma as a barrier?" *Journal of American College Health*, 66(4), 1-8.

Produced Examples



These programs are made possible by the USC Student Health Fee.

USC Student Health
Keck Medicine of USC

213-740-9355 (WELL)
studenthealth.usc.edu

Enhancing Your Well-Being

Drop-in, no appointments necessary



Let's Talk

Monday–Thursday, 2:30–3:30 p.m.

Let's Talk is a drop-in opportunity to talk to a counselor to get professional guidance on any number of social and mental health topics. If you've ever wondered what it's like to talk to a counselor, this is your opportunity to find out.

STU422

Specialist liaison days as follows—

Monday - Karina Ramos - La Casa

Tuesday - Mary Weber - LGBTQ

Wednesday - Annie Hsueh - APASS

Thursday - Kendra Archer - CBCSA

Let's Talk, International Students Edition

Tuesdays 1:30 - 2:30 p.m.

Special section for International Students will be offered in the Office of International Students (OIS)

Royal Street Structure Suite 101

Facilitated by Alice Phang



Well-being Wednesdays

Wednesday, 6-7 p.m.

Well-being Wednesdays offers students the opportunity to wind down with stress-relief activities, connect with others and take a mid-week break to enhance your well-being!

Supporting
Trojans to

thrive

NOTES FOR STUDENTS FROM USC STUDENT HEALTH



SPRING 2020

USC Student Health

Office for Health Promotion Strategy

Backbone for the USC Well-being Collective

The Office for Health Promotion Strategy, backbone for the USC Well-being Collective, is embedded in USC Student Health and serves as the administrative core to support campus partners in aligning their strategic objectives with student wellbeing. The Office for Health Promotion Strategy works with participating partners, the Steering Committee, and most importantly, students to activate change at USC.

For additional questions, please contact: USC Student Health, Office for Health Promotion Strategy, Backbone for USC Well-being Collective at wellbeingcollective@usc.edu

USC Well-being Collective

uscbwellbeingcollective.usc.edu