

by connecting with other institutions that are taking part in awareness events during that time.

Educational Programs

In developing educational programs, remember that peer health educators play a unique role that is unparalleled by campus professionals. Well trained peer health educators can present educational programs focusing on mental health awareness and the reduction of stigma in a variety of settings. Residence Life, academic classes, Greek Life, and athletics may be interested in receiving educational programming. However, in dealing with an issue as serious as mental health, it is absolutely necessary that student peer health educators are well trained, know how and when to make a referral, and realize when to seek outside support.

Many campuses choose to bring speakers to their campus to focus on issues surrounding mental health awareness. These individuals, some of whom have been directly impacted by a mental health issue or suicide, can speak in a professional manner and help to reduce stigma. When a well liked and credible speaker is able to effectively capture audience's attention, this incorporates a unique opportunity for students to discuss available resources and how to seek help for either themselves or a friend.

Screening Day

Yet another area of programming that can help meet the needs of your students are mental health screening days. The following information will assist your campus to take part in the National Depression Screening Day.

National Depression Screening Day – October

Screening for Mental Health, Inc., (SMH) first introduced the concept of large-scale mental health screenings in 1991 with the [National Depression Screening Day](#). The National Depression Screening Day will feature new educational materials that will help empower members of the public to recognize and respond to the warning signs of suicide in a friend or a loved one. The STOP A SUICIDE TODAY! campaign highlights the importance of identifying and treating depression and other mental illnesses before a situation becomes urgent.

National Depression Screening Day is designed to:

- Help educate the public about the signs of suicide and effective ways to respond to someone at risk
- Provide mental health screenings and educational materials about common mental health problems
- Provide materials for clinicians to assess suicidality and treat mental health problems

For more information, please visit
www.mentalhealthscreening.org

Working With Other Groups and Offices

In order to develop a comprehensive mental health awareness program, it is necessary to involve a wide variety of individuals and departments. The more groups you get involved, the more comprehensive impact you will have on your student body.

Identifying and recruiting partners serves several purposes. First, it is simple nature for people to support those programs they help create. If attendance at events is a crucial part of your campaign, you will need all the help you can get! Second, any work you do creating partners for your mental health awareness programming will help to establish allies for future event planning. Third, by including other groups, you can take advantage of their resources, whether this means financial help or simply a place to hold a program. Many groups will lend this kind of support in exchange for a chance to have their name associated with a positive campus-wide event.

Form a Planning Committee

Visit those campus groups that you have determined may have a shared interest in mental health awareness programming and invite them to join your planning committee. This committee can take on the following responsibilities.

- Discussion of program co-sponsorship
- Creation of timeline
- Development of programming goals
- Identification of target audience
- Creation of theme
- Program planning
- Marketing
- Evaluation

Program planning committee members should determine how often they will meet and the means of most effective communication.

Develop Win/Win Partnerships

A key to effective programming is the development of win/win partnerships. With already busy schedules and various responsibilities, it is likely that several campus groups may wish to address the issue of mental health awareness but simply do not have the time or resources. By forming partnerships, diverse groups are able to come together and develop programming that serves everyone's needs and provides a valuable service.

- Ideas for developing win/win partnerships include:
- Work with resident assistants who are required to provide educational programming.
- Develop a relationship with the campus counseling center and help to promote their available services.



- Work with academic departments that curriculum surrounding mental health. Psychology and Social Work programs may welcome in-class presentations.
- Join forces with your Campus Recreation Center. Exercise has been shown to reduce stress and contribute to overall physical and mental health.
- Develop a relationship with Greek Life and Athletics. Students involved in these organizations may be required to attend a specific number of educational events per year.

Create Relationships in the Community

In gaining support for mental health awareness, it is important to remember that each community is unique and has valuable resources. Many local business owners welcome an opportunity to have their name attached to a positive event that will draw the attention of many students. In addition, community law

enforcement officers are involved in responding to issues related to mental health and suicide. Organizations that may be willing to help support mental health awareness include:

- Local mental health or wellness agencies
- Community health department or hospital
- Businesses and agencies serving or employing college students
- Local media and student newspaper
- Mayor and City Council Members

Remember, it is critical that you send a thank you note to any community partner that provides support. This is particularly important when receiving any donations. Expressing your appreciation will help to ensure a positive relationship.

