

Funding Request Template ***“It’s Time! Addressing Youth Mental Health” Series***

Below find several categories of information that may be helpful in approaching potential funders for the “It’s Time!” Youth Mental Health Program Series. All of these paragraphs have been successfully used in previous requests to local funders from such organization types as Women’s/ Jr. Women’s Clubs, Jr. League Associations, PTA’s/PTO’s, church outreach grants, Rotary and Optimist Clubs, and community hospital outreach committees, as well as individual donors.

In addition to the following categories of information, applications often require community/region specific information about populations served (composition and numbers reached), other funders who will be approached, sustainability plan, timelines, and of course amount of support requested, to name a few.

The following narrative paragraphs are provided for your use, edit, and customization as you prepare to approach potential funders to support these programs. Cut and paste at will!

Program or Project Objective: The overall objective of the program series is to improve and support youth mental health and specifically to increase knowledge and awareness, decrease stigma, and increase support for youth struggling with depression and other mental health issues. The series includes three stand alone programs that are most powerful when used collectively with these target populations: teachers, teens, and parents.

For teachers: “It’s Time! Adults Addressing Youth and Teen Depression” is an innovative, facilitated in-service program for teachers and other adults who work with youth that raises awareness and understanding of teen depression, and teaches strategies for: identification and referral of students, supportive classroom behaviors for children struggling with depression, and parent involvement. The program features powerful and engaging video stories of youth who share their experiences and the important role adults can have. The goals are prevention, intervention, increased identification, referral skills, and reduction of stigma. (The program is appropriate and adaptable for teachers, coaches, religious instructors, and any adults who work with youth).

For teens: “It’s Time! Teens Supporting Teens” Peer Program is designed to be taught by high school students for middle and high school classes. Teens prioritized the objectives of the program to focus on building their ability to recognize and support troubled friends. Trained peer educators lead two forty-five minute interactive sessions for 7th-12th graders. Teens learn about depression, support skills, and the importance of connecting with others. Teens, from all walks of life, tell their stories in hopes of helping others know that it is okay to seek help, that there is hope, and that they need not “live like this” for the rest of their lives. The use of these stories combined with presentations by trained teen peer educators provides a unique educational opportunity to acquire skills-both for the teen audience of the program as well as by the peer educators

For parents: “It’s Time! Parents Addressing Teen Depression” is a take home DVD resource for teachers and other health professionals to share with parents of students who are struggling. It contains a collection of stories by parents who have faced the mental health needs of their children, sought support, and experienced the benefits of effective interventions. The DVD provides an opportunity to open the door to conversations with parents, break through denial and reluctance, and raise awareness and understanding. .” The DVD would be made available for school mental health team staff to distribute to families and provides an opportunity to connect staff and families around student mental health concerns. The staff in-service program is adaptable for use with parent groups.

Background:

The program creator, InHealth WI, creates and delivers innovative health education programs and training inspired by needs in the community, working in partnership with organizations to maximize efforts and resources, and to bring health education to the underserved. The hallmark of InHealth programs is video stories of local people that convey information and open the doors to discussion of difficult health topics. Engaging facilitators teach and lead around these stories using informative slides, art and music. The programs were developed by teams of mental health professionals, educators, parents, teens, and community partners and have been presented in over 100 schools/districts. Evaluation results/feedback from teachers indicates:

- 82% increased their curiosity about students' attitudes, behaviors & academic problems
- 82% increased their use of strategies to create positive connections with students who seemed to be struggling with - emotional/mental health problems
- 66% increased conversations with other staff about how to better understand student behavior & connect with students
- 42% increased their contacts with parents about how to best understand & connect with their child & the parents
- Schools continually report there is no program quite like or as effective as "It's Time!"

Evidence of need:

Consider:

- 50% of adult depression begins by age 14.
- 20% of U.S. youth experience mental health disorders.
- 80% of U.S. children with mental illness are not receiving treatment.
- 75-80% of children who do receive treatment and support are successful.
- (Prevalence research predicts about 37,000 of Milwaukee County children currently have a need for treatment, with approximately 1/3 from low income households.) [This can be a city specific statistic.](#)
- Low income students are less likely to be identified and treated.
- Mental health professions point to the need for an effective informational resource for families who need support and education about depression in order to get past the stigma and seek help

As pressures increase on families, whether as a result of single parenting, poverty, lack of health care, etc., stress and mental health issues increase. Research shows that increases in the incidence of mental illness and stress in adults result in direct increases in the incidence in their children. Furthermore, such mental health needs go untreated disproportionately in low income families. Untreated depression and the failure of early intervention often results in more serious and unsuccessful treatment as mental illness manifests over time.

The need to address mental health issues among youth is particularly acute. Undiagnosed, untreated depression correlates to poor school performance, learning disabilities, drug and alcohol use, suicide, behavior and eating disorders, as well as unrealized learning potential. Youth mental health has been identified as a high priority health concern by the U.S. Surgeon General, the Center for Disease Control, the National Middle School Association and numerous local and state public health officials and organizations. By the year 2020, it is predicted mental illness will be the leading morbidity of youth in the U.S.

School staff and health professionals tell us the incidence of and the failure to recognize depression extends well into early childhood. Families need help in recognizing and accepting the challenges of a student identified with depression or related mental health issues. The stigma of depression is a serious obstacle that prevents many youth from receiving the support and treatment that can mean the difference between a lifetime struggle with mental illness and health.

(The next paragraph is an example of state specific information that can be incorporated into a request; such info can often be found through mental health organizations, state departments of health and human services, departments of education/public instruction, etc.)

In Wisconsin, 1 in 5 teens have considered suicide, one of the highest rates in the country. Wisconsin also ranks high, 48th out of 51 states, on the number of poor mental health days. States with the highest rates of teen suicides also experience higher occurrence of stigmatization and the lowest availability of focused mental health services for children and adolescents. (WI Dept. of Public Instruction; Lt. Governor's Task Force on Women and Depression in WWI, 2006).

Expected outcomes & indicators of success:

Teacher/parent/teen participants in the program will acquire:

- Increased awareness and understanding of youth depression & the important role of adults
- Ability to recognize potential problems, next steps, and connections to resources,
- Knowledge of/strategies for supportive behaviors for youth dealing with depression,
- Ability to engage depressed youth in learning and other positive behaviors,
- Awareness that they are not alone in their struggles, and
- Opportunity to become involved as partners to address student needs.

As research points out, the earlier intervention takes place, the more successful it is and often the less severe the depression and its related effects. Sometimes teachers believe families are unwilling or unable to recognize the problem. In other cases parents feel the school staff is unresponsive. Teens often are frustrated, believe they are alone, want the bad feelings to go away, or may not even realize what they are experiencing is depression. What is needed is increased communication, awareness, and understanding, working together to provide the appropriate intervention and support.

This program series provides

- 1.) teachers with knowledge, understanding, and strategies that affirm and capitalize on many things they already do and can incorporate into their classrooms and interactions with kids. It raises their awareness of the impact that adults can have on the mental health of young people and the unique position that teachers are in to observe youth struggling with depression, offer support, and connect kids and families with resources. It provides staff with skills and tools to engage parents in difficult conversations around the issues of depression, to meet students' needs, and maximize learning potential.
- 2.) Teens with knowledge, awareness, and understanding of the ways they can support friends they recognize are struggling with depression or other mental health issues and help connect them to resources and support, and
- 3.) Parents with understanding that adolescent depression is real, recognition and intervention are critical to students struggling with mental health issues, and that they are not alone in facing these challenges.

Finally, this series breaks through the stigma and provides parents, teachers, and teens the language, knowledge, and opportunity to begin conversations about youth mental health.

(Or an alternative concluding paragraph):

The ultimate goal of this project is to support youth and their families struggling with depression and connect them to resources. Lack of awareness and understanding and the stigma that surrounds depression are serious obstacles that prevent youth from receiving the support and treatment that can mean the difference between a lifetime struggle with mental illness and health. As one parent in the program video points out, it took nearly seven years for her now middle school daughter to be diagnosed with bipolar disorder, yet they knew something was not right from the time she was a toddler. Finally, with treatment, she has become a functioning, fun loving and enthusiastic middle school student with friends and a future.

There are immeasurable benefits to the student, the family, the school, and the community when youth mental health needs are met in a timely and appropriate manner. Clearly this is an area of education we can have a significant and positive impact on! Thank you for your consideration of our request and investment in the health of our youth and communities.

Questions about additional information related to these programs, content, evaluation, or other written support can be directed to Sue McKenzie, Director of Education Programs, NAHEC, 414-390-2191 or smckenzie@nahec.org.