Teen Speak-Out: Engaging rural teenagers to develop community-driven interventions to address stress

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Stress is associated with teen risk behavior

- substance misuse,
- mental health difficulties,
- academic problems,
- poor decision-making, and
- diminished physical well-being
OBJECTIVES:

1. Identify individual & social factors associated with stress among teens, living in rural communities, by convening a series of community “Teen Speak-Out” dinners in targeted catchment areas.

2. Design & evaluate the feasibility & acceptability of at least one measurable intervention to address stress among teens that can be reproduced.
Design and Setting

Community-engagement & qualitative research

Several rural underserved rural communities
Participants

Teens, aged 13-19 years of age
Teen Advisory Board (TAB), including teenagers, community member advocates/stakeholders, primary care clinicians, members of the research team
Study Phases

“Engagement” dinners with prompt questions, discussion, brainstorming

Identify perceptions of approaches to addressing stress

Establishment of a Teen Advisory Board (TAB)

Design & implement intervention
“Teen Speak-Out” Dinners

- Five events
- More than 35 teens with some attending multiple sessions
- Two youth leaders
- Community stakeholders
**Teens want:**

- Safe space for discussing stressors
- More coordination of school schedules
- More adult guidance
- “Therapy” available at school
- School mechanism for dealing with bullying
- ”LIFE 101” course
Suggested Interventions

• Mindfulness apps or programs
• Counseling/therapy available at school
• Free Yoga, dance or Zumba classes at school
• Discussion groups like Teen Speak-Out
• School-wide on-line and coordinated schedule
• Project similar to the “Humans of New York” or Tumblr site
Intervention

Researched apps on stress, anxiety apps rated for “Teens” on Google Play

(Dartmouth Center for Technology and Behavioral Health)

- 7 Cups – Anxiety & Stress Chat
- Pacifica – Stress and Anxiety
- SuperBetter
Outcome Measures

- Teen well-being pre/post intervention
- Acceptance of intervention
- Perceived relevance & usefulness
- Intention to use *Pacifica* in the future
- Ideas about strategies for broad dissemination
Results

• Apps available to support teens in managing stress (*Pacifica chosen by TAB*)
• Compelling & heart-breaking stories shared by teens
• Through AIMS Grant funded counselor/therapist through local FQHC for a local high school
Limitations

- Small feasibility pilot
- School activities
- School calendar
- Teen assent/parental consent for participation in Phase 2
Conclusions to date

• Through an AIMS grant, full-time counselor/therapist hired through FQHC and placed at local K-12 school
• Significant stakeholder support = expanding network of school-based counselor/therapist positions through FQHC
• Predict low-risk technology solution to support teens in managing stress
• Considering intervention targeting teens with pre-existing anxiety/mental health diagnosis
Thank you!

Questions?
Comments?