Promoting Behavioral Health on Historically Black Colleges and Universities Campuses:

A BLUEPRINT FOR SUCCESS

—REvised EDITION—

HBCU CENTER FOR EXCELLENCE in Behavioral Health
Morehouse School of Medicine (MSM) is a historically black institution and a community medical school whose mission is dedicated to improving the health and well-being of individuals and communities, increasing the diversity of the health professional and scientific workforce, addressing primary healthcare needs through programs in education, research and service with emphasis on people of color and the underserved urban and rural populations in Georgia and the nation.

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The views expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the official policies of MSM or the Department of Health and Human Services; nor does mention of organizations imply endorsement by the U.S. Government.

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INTRODUCTION

The Historically Black Colleges and Universities Center for Excellence (HBCU-CFE) serves as a unique center designed to facilitate, develop, collaborate and support strategies and opportunities for the 105 HBCUs. The overall goals of the HBCU-CFE are to: (1) promote student behavioral health to positively impact student retention; (2) expand campus service capacity, with a focus on culturally appropriate behavioral health resources; (3) facilitate best practices and dissemination and (4) foster student leadership and behavioral health workforce development.

The HBCU-CFE employs a multimodal approach to the promotion of student behavioral health and retention and workforce development on HBCU campuses. Approaches include the behavioral health mini-grant program, Kognito At-Risk Program, monthly behavioral health webinars, HBCU behavioral health policy academy, behavioral health awareness virtual event, public service announcement (PSA) campaigns, student leadership development, technical assistance, information dissemination and other services. The HBCU-CFE continues to build and strengthen its collaborative partnership with the 105 HBCU institutions.

BACKGROUND PERSPECTIVE

In recent years, there has been a growing awareness of the importance of the promotion of behavioral health on college campuses. Students reported depression and anxiety among top impediments to academic performance (American College Health Association, 2012).

Many barriers keep African-Americans from participating in behavioral health promotion activities and seeking help for behavioral health disorders. These barriers are also apparent with African-American college students. Many students may be unaware of resources available to them or how to access services. It is therefore, important to develop innovative strategies to engage students in behavioral health awareness and health promotion.

Innovative Strategies and Recommendations to Maximize Student Potential on College Campuses

Sixty four percent of students who experience mental health problems in college eventually withdraw from school. Institutions can utilize the following strategies to maximize students’ potential (American College Health Association, 2012):

- Increase training opportunities for faculty, staff and students as they are often the first to encounter students with behavioral health concerns;
- Encourage peer-run support groups;
- Promote and publicize available accommodations, services and supports to all students;
- Expand opportunities for screening and brief intervention;
- Encourage students to get help before issues grow; and
- Build partnerships with local behavioral health professionals and organizations.

The HBCU-CFE has a successful history of working with 105 HBCUs
OUR STRATEGIES AND SUCCESSFUL APPROACHES

The programs and services of the HBCU-CFE provide a mechanism where HBCUs can promote student behavioral health and retention. The HBCU-CFE has a successful history of working with 105 HBCUs. Our national HBCU behavioral health network has cultivated a foundation for facilitating, collaborating, developing, mentoring and strengthening partnership with HBCUs.

BEHAVIORAL HEALTH CAPACITY EXPANSION MINI-GRANT PROGRAM

The purpose of the HBCU behavioral health capacity expansion mini-grant program is to support and promote opportunities for HBCUs to foster careers in behavioral health through internships at behavioral health sites; to expand knowledge of culturally appropriate, evidence-based emerging best practices; to expand screening and referral services for students at risk of behavioral health disorders to support the use of behavioral health promotion and prevention activities.

The focus areas of the campus-based behavioral health mini-grant programs include: training frontline faculty, staff and peer educators on how to recognize and respond to signs of psychological distress and other behavioral health disorders impacting college students; using social media to promote campus-wide activities designed to raise awareness of behavioral health disorders as well as its associated impact on students’ performance and reducing stigma.

The Goals of The HBCU-CFE

- Increase the number of HBCU students interning in the substance abuse treatment field;
- Increase HBCU student exposure to career options in the substance abuse workforce;
- Establish and/or increase HBCU partnerships with local, regional and state substance abuse partners committed to increasing diversity in the addictions workforce;
- Work with HBCUs to provide students with course credit for participation in internships; and
- Connect with state licensure boards to provide students with credit toward state substance abuse certifications.

Behavioral health capacity expansion mini-grants are awarded through a competitive process. Over the past two years, 68 mini-grants were awarded with a number of institutions receiving multiple awards.
INSTITUTIONS THAT RECEIVED A BEHAVIORAL HEALTH CAPACITY EXPANSION MINI-GRANT (2011-2013)

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*From 2005-2013 over 80% of HBCUs have received a mini-grant*

Over the past two years, 68 mini-grants were awarded
The Annual Dr. Lonnie E. Mitchell HBCU Behavioral Health Policy Academy, sponsored by SAMHSA, continues the legacy and work of the late Dr. Lonnie E. Mitchell, an esteemed educator, administrator, policy advisor and psychotherapist. Dr. Mitchell envisioned bringing cutting-edge substance abuse and mental health research, treatment, prevention, policy development, career development and health disparity issues to the general public and HBCU community.

A major focus of the Academy is to equip students, faculty, staff and administrators with the knowledge, tools and resources around policy development and implementation; thus, enhancing their skills to: review identified behavioral health priorities specific to their campus; develop and implement specific behavioral health activities and identify opportunities for collaboration and networking in creating sustainable behavioral health policy changes on their campus. Each year, up to 15 HBCUs who are HBCU-CFE mini-grantees, are selected to participate in this two and a half day event. Each HBCU mini-grantee is invited to send a team of six which may include faculty, staff, administrators and students.

The Annual HBCU Behavioral Health Awareness Day is an opportunity to increase knowledge and awareness of behavioral health issues, including signs and symptoms, the impact on academic performance and the overall well-being of students.

The Annual HBCU Behavioral Health Awareness Day is a virtual event that includes presentations from students and faculty from various HBCUs, features a national behavioral health expert and highlights cultural-specific and groundbreaking behavioral health practices.

“HBCU - Center for Excellence (CFE) is a wonderful resource for the HBCU community. The Center provides many resources that support students to learn about behavioral health needs and resources. In turn we become effective peer leaders on our campus and in our communities.”

Student participant

Social media outlets such as Twitter, Facebook, YouTube and blogs provide an avenue to disseminate behavioral health promotional information to a large number of individuals. The HBCU-CFE supports HBCUs in their efforts to engage their campus community around behavioral health awareness via social media.

One of our signature events offers students the opportunity to promote campus-specific behavioral health campaigns through the use of social media. The annual behavioral health communication PSA campaign provides an opportunity for students to produce an informative and educational communication campaign to disseminate information and raise awareness of behavioral health issues. The campaigns are required to emphasize positive behaviors, benefits of peer support and provide referral and or resource information. This event has been very successful among HBCU students.
Active Minds chapters help the campus community realize that mental health impacts us all. Everyone should feel empowered to speak up and reach out.
ACTIVE MINDS CHAPTERS ON HBCU CAMPUSES

Active Minds is a national campus-based student run organization with a focus on mental health awareness, education and advocacy. Local chapters work to increase awareness of mental health issues, provide information and resources regarding mental health and mental illness, encourage students to seek help and serve as a liaison between students and the campus mental health community.

The HBCU-CFE works closely with Active Minds, Inc. to develop student-led chapters at HBCU campuses across the country that work to educate their peers about mental health and eliminate the stigma surrounding mental illness. Utilizing a variety of different programs and awareness campaigns, Active Minds chapters help the campus community realize that mental health impacts us all. Everyone should feel empowered to speak up and reach out.

MONTHLY BEHAVIORAL HEALTH WEBINAR SERIES

The monthly behavioral health webinar series is designed to provide the tools, resources and strategies to create and/or enhance campus specific behavioral health promotion and prevention, workforce development and leadership opportunities. The webinar series highlights innovative projects, promotes the exchange of cutting edge ideas and collaboration and disseminates information about culturally appropriate and evidence-based practices to the HBCU community. Faculty, students and staff actively participate in the webinar series.

SOME PAST WEBINAR TOPICS INCLUDED:
- Elements of Hazing and Bullying on College Campuses
- Kognito At-Risk: Suicide Prevention Training
- Working with Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Questioning Youth
- Impact of Counseling Centers on Retention Rates
- Overview of Addiction
- Social Media and Campus-Based Behavioral Health Promotion
- Spirituality as an Approach to Addressing Behavioral Health Needs
KOGNITO AT-RISK PROGRAM:
PROMOTING STUDENT SUCCESS!

Kognito At-Risk Program is an online, interactive suicide prevention training simulation experience designed for students, faculty, staff, risk assessment teams and administrators. The goal of this program is to significantly increase the number of individuals on HBCU campuses trained to identify, address and appropriately refer students exhibiting signs of psychological distress, including depression, anxiety and thoughts of suicide.

SOME INSTITUTIONAL BENEFITS:

Promote early intervention

Students experiencing psychological distress tend to exhibit behaviors that can be detected by fellow members of their academic community.

Gatekeeper training - teaching people within a community to recognize a person at risk - Kognito At-Risk Program has been shown to be a valuable strategy in increasing early intervention efforts.

A national study to assess students who participated in the Kognito At-Risk Program shows positive results:

An increase in the likelihood that a student will approach and refer an at-risk student

An improvement in student confidence and the motivation to help refer at-risk students

A reduction in stigma associated with mental illness
“I want to help my community by changing the views of behavioral and mental health.”

mini-grant staff participant
“It was a pleasure and a great opportunity for me to be a part of this grant. Over the past five years, 41 students have participated in the program where they have gained and provided knowledge to their peers and community about substance abuse and behavioral health…the program has allowed the student interns opportunities to grow, to have hands-on work experiences and make a difference in the lives of their community as a whole.”

mini-grant staff participant

“The HBCU project taught me a lot about substance abuse. It has shown me what I want to accomplish in the legal field....overall, this experience has sharpened my critical thinking skills which are essential to my pursuit of becoming a juvenile and family court judge.”

mini-grant faculty participant

“After working on this project, I was aware that this is where I needed to be. I want to help my community by changing the views of behavioral and mental health. We should be able to discuss the issues and develop interventions to improve our community.”

mini-grant staff participant

“This experience has fueled my interest in substance abuse counseling. I did not know that so many people were lacking the information about the effects of different drugs. I want to be able to give advice and help others.”

student participant
CONCLUSION

We are very proud of the accomplishments of the HBCU-CFE in promoting behavioral health awareness and workforce development on HBCU campuses and of the many individual accomplishments at each HBCU. Each year, we have been able to expand and advance network communication and connections to HBCUs for resources, technical assistance, mentorship and collaboration. We look forward to working with all HBCUs to promote student behavioral health and student retention.
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