



Exploring Evidence-Based Mental Health Prevention Programs to Build Resiliency in College Students

Elizabeth Anderson, RN

ABSTRACT

Purpose: Mental health diagnoses and utilization of services are increasing amongst college students. Mental health prevention programs can cultivate resiliency traits that are protective of mental health. The purpose of this project is to assess for the need of a mental health prevention program at a small urban-college in Vermont and make program recommendations based on staff and student needs.

Methods: A needs assessment project was conducted at the college student health center. Separate needs surveys were created and distributed to students and student wellness staff. Student resiliency was assessed using the Brief Resiliency Scale, a validated tool. Literature review was performed to identify potential mental health prevention programs based on student and staff needs.

Results: 14 surveys were completed by student health staff. Staff expressed a need for psychoeducation and skills building programs. Majority of staff believe the program should be required and delivered in a seminar/class or small group format. 12 student surveys were completed and resulted in an average resiliency score of 3.06 (normal resilience), median 2.83 (low resilience). Students identified stressors such as shared-living, homesickness, adjusting to college courses and mental health. Students expressed need for better access to counseling, explanation of resources and campus modifications. Three evidence-based mental health prevention programs that matched identified needs were selected.

Conclusion: Data suggests there is a need for mental health and resiliency building programming in the college setting. Several evidence-based mental health prevention programs exist and could address the needs of students and staff. Further study is needed to know if program implementation would lead to improved resiliency and mental health outcomes amongst students.

CONTACT

Elizabeth Anderson
University of Vermont
Email: eander33@uvm.edu
Phone: 402-659-8467

INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND

- Mental health diagnoses & utilization of services are increasing amongst college students.¹
- Demand for counseling center services has on average, increased 4x faster than the size of the general student body²
- MH prevention programs have been utilized in higher education have improved students' self-perceptions and social/emotional skills and reduced levels of stress, depression and anxiety³
- Resilience plays a major role in maintaining a state of positive mental health and reducing negative indicators of mental health⁴

RATIONALE

Champlain College health providers overwhelmed with identified increase in students presenting with Mental Health issues.

PURPOSE

Assess for the need of mental health prevention program Champlain College

AIMS

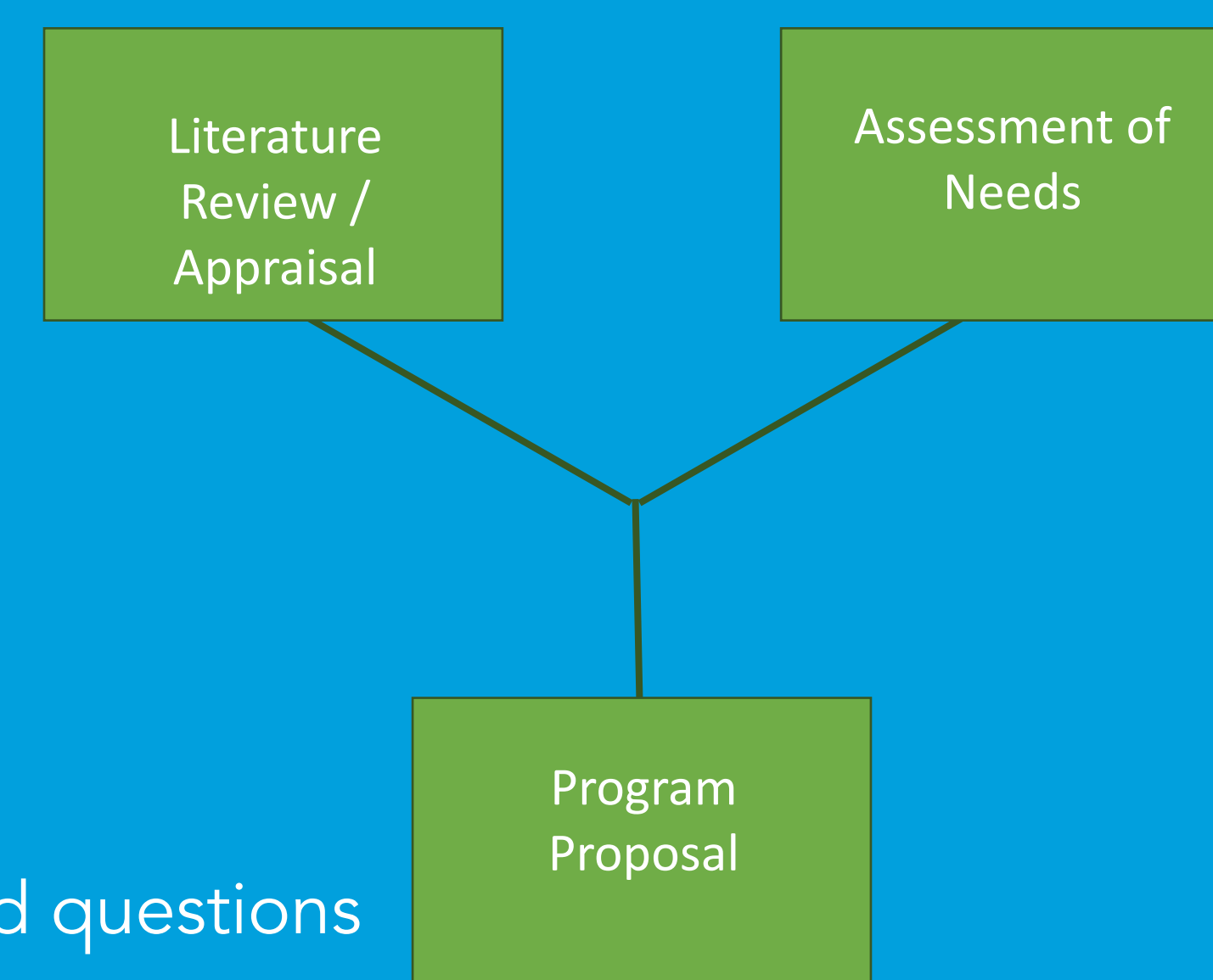
1. Collect & analyze student and staff needs
2. Appraise literature for mental health prevention programs
3. Propose evidence-based programs to student health staff at Champlain College

METHODS AND MATERIALS

SITE

Champlain College Student Health Center

PROCEDURE



MEASURES

- Open-ended questions
- Ranking
- Likert scale (BRS)

ANALYSIS

- Content & thematic analysis of qualitative responses
- Quantitative analysis

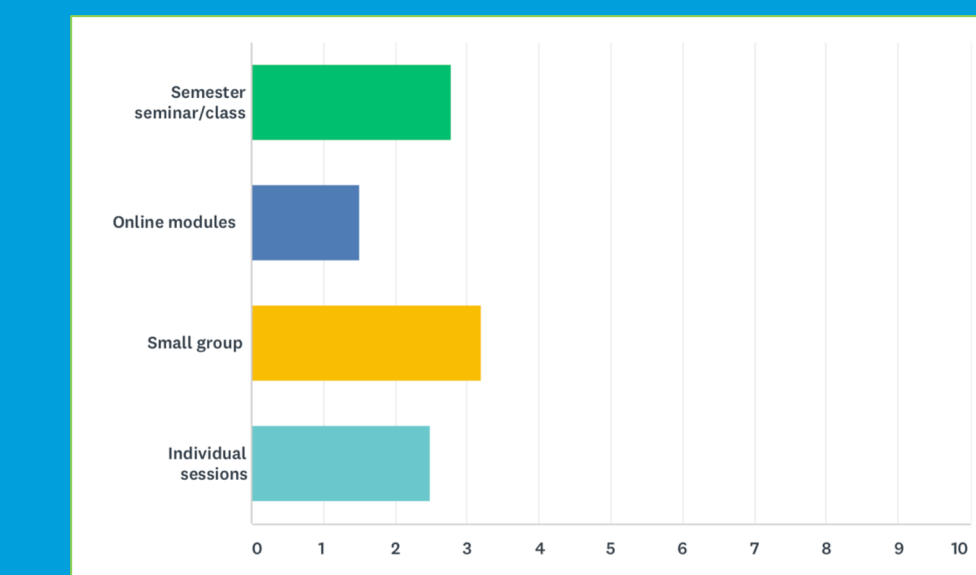
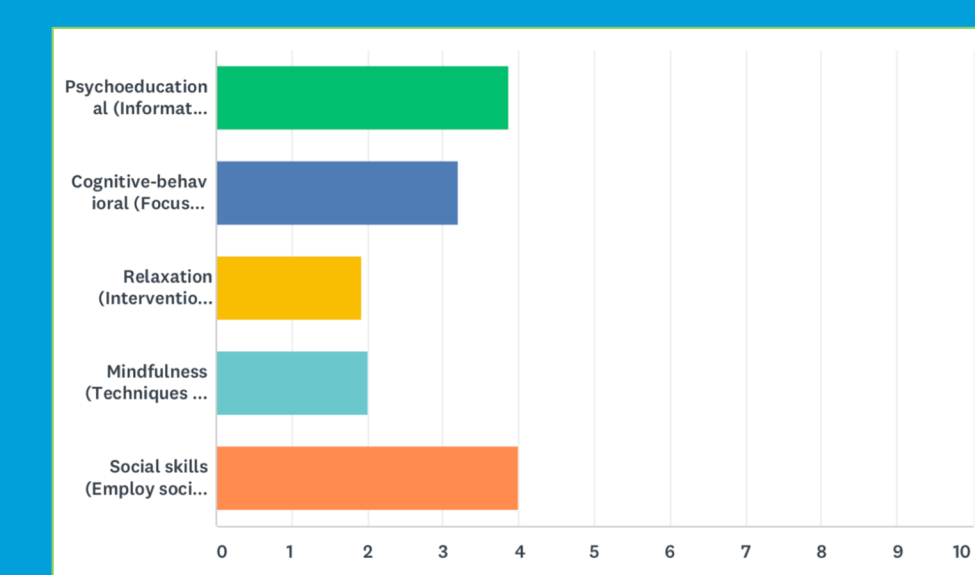
RESULTS

STUDENTS

- Resiliency: range 2.33 – 4.17 (low – normal)
 - Avg. = 3.06 (normal)
 - Median = 2.83 (low)
- Stressors: "having to be an adult", roommates, physical/mental health
- College is meeting needs: counseling center, health center, faculty, RA's, academic coaches
- Unmet needs: better access to counselors, checking in with struggling students, realistic picture, access to what resources are available, help with life skills (time management, work-life-balance)

STAFF

- College is meeting needs: similar to students
- Unmet needs: required first year seminar/longer orientation, better outreach, life skills training, more counselors/residential life staff, peer mentoring, social programming



AVAILABLE PROGRAMS

- Meta-analysis – skill-building programs with supervision have best results
- The Penn Resilience Program
 - Strength-based prevention training program
 - Evidence Based – increases well-being and optimism, reduces depression, anxiety and conduct problems
 - Works on resilience competencies
 - Eight 2-hour sessions, train-the-trainer model
- The Student Resilience Project
 - Web-based, public-healthy-style prevention program
 - Strength-based and trauma informed
 - Includes videos, skill-building activities, resources and campus information, and "What I Wish I Knew" stories from current students give examples of problems they faced and how they overcame them
 - Increase sense of belonging, strengthen emotional and academic coping skills, manage stress
 - Built for FSU, creating tool-kit for other universities
- Student Support Network
 - Gate-keeper training
 - Trains peers to recognize warning signs of distress, how to address with active listening, connect with resources
 - Suicide Prevention Resource Best Practice
 - Free training manual

DISCUSSION

KEY FINDINGS

- Qualitative data suggests students and staff have similar ideas on how college can better support student's needs
- Quantitative data suggests student's resiliency level is low-normal
- Several evidence-based mental health programs exist that meet the needs of staff and students
- Proposed programs were well-received by student health staff

STRENGTHS

- Utilized data from both students and staff who work directly with students
- Programs were recommended by specific needs of CC staff and students

INTERPRETATION

- Preliminary assessment supports need for MH programming
- Evidence-programs could meet identified needs of college

LIMITATIONS

- Not intended for generalizability
- Unable to measure program outcomes
- Length of project

CONCLUSIONS

- Student health staff deemed needs assessment data useful
- Student health staff can continue to distribute needs assessments for further data collection
- Needs survey could be adapted to be utilized at other institutions

NEXT STEPS

- Measure outcomes of implemented program

REFERENCES

1. Lipson, S. K., Lattie, E. G., & Eisenberg, D. (2018). Increased Rates of Mental Health Service Utilization by US College Students: 10-Year Population-Level Trends (2007–2017). *Psychiatric services, 70*(1), 60-63.
2. Watkins, D. C., Hunt, J. B., & Eisenberg, D. (2012). Increased demand for mental health services on college campuses: Perspectives from administrators. *Qualitative Social Work, 11*(3), 319-337.
3. Conley, C. S., Durlak, J. A., & Dickson, D. A. (2013). An evaluative review of outcome research on universal mental health promotion and prevention programs for higher education students. *Journal of American College Health, 61*(5), 286-301.
4. Hu, T., Zhang, D., & Wang, J. (2015). A meta-analysis of the trait resilience and mental health. *Personality and Individual Differences, 76*, 18-27.