

# Frontline School-Based Stakeholders and the Mental Health Literacy Needs of Adolescents: A Program Evaluation

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## Purpose

- To evaluate a mental health literacy curriculum used for adolescents in a school setting

## Background

- In 2023, the CDC reports that:
  - 40% of high school students felt persistently sad or hopeless
  - 29% experienced poor mental health
  - 20% seriously considered attempting suicide
  - 9% of high school students attempted suicide
- Virginia SOLs require 1 semester total of mental health education in either 9<sup>th</sup> or 10<sup>th</sup> grade
- There is no standardized best practice curriculum for Mental Health Literacy (MHL) Education
- School Nurses are often the initial access point to identify concerns, determine interventions, and link families to school and/or community resources (NASN)



## Methods

19 Total Interviews/Surveys from 5 Different Richmond Area High Schools



- Stakeholder meetings included at least one school nurse, counselor, and health teacher for a total of 19 completed expert stakeholder feedback forms
- Qualitative thematic analysis on data derived from semi-structured focus group interviews/surveys

## Main Themes Identified by School Stakeholders

- Virginia's MHL SOLs need strengthened
- Students need more MHL Education than is allotted for in the school schedule
- Context Matters
- School-wide coordination of MHL and a culture that supports positive mental health is vital
- School stakeholders crave guidance on navigating the multiple access to care barriers that exist beyond the school setting

## Implications

- Work with schools to implement more MHL education, including touchpoints beyond 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grade
- Context Matters: Encourage a school-wide supportive culture and coordination of MHL that includes: (1) a school-based behavioral health team with nurse representation; (2) administration; (3) parents; (4) students (5) identity relevance reflected in MHL curricula and in the school community
- Work with local and state governments to impact policy changes to address gaps in MHL education
- Clear pathways for help and referrals outside of school are needed
- Develop ways to measure impact of MHL education

## Project Team

- DNP Advisor: Regina DeGennaro, DNP, APRN, CNS, AOCN, CNL
- Second Reviewer: Richard J. Westphal, PhD, RN, PMHCNS-BC, PMHNP-BC, FAAN
- Clinical Research Data Specialist: David Martin, PHD
- Practice Site Mentors: Sarah Jaynes-Gobble, MED and Catie-Reagan King, EdD

## References:

