

Second Wind Fund Youth Suicide Prevention Program

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I am a mental health professional, a suicide prevention advocate and a suicide prevention nonprofit organization.

Presentation Audience: Prevention Efforts, Beginner

Educational Objectives:

1. At the conclusion of this presentation, the participant should be able to discuss the need for youth suicide prevention in the state of Colorado.
2. At the conclusion of this presentation, the participant should be able to summarize common barriers to care and the benefits of mental health therapy for youth at risk for suicide.
3. At the conclusion of this presentation, the participant should be able to define the mission of Second Wind Fund, as well as the processes, implications and lessons learned.

Suicide is the second leading cause of death for Coloradans aged 10-34 and Colorado is consistently among the top ten states in highest suicide rates. Data from the 2015 Healthy Kids Colorado Survey indicate that suicidal thoughts and behaviors impact a high percentage of middle and high school students. In fact, nearly 18 percent of high schoolers reported considering suicide, and 7.8 percent reported making a suicide attempt in the previous year. Innovative, accessible and timely suicide prevention efforts are needed now more than ever.

Our presentation focuses on the Second Wind Fund (SWF) whose program mission is to decrease suicide among youth by removing practical barriers to treatment (e.g., financial costs, accessible providers). Our presentation is relevant to the conference theme because practical barriers hinder help-seeking behavior and thus can disproportionately affect youth from economically disadvantaged and underinsured families. Furthermore, these vulnerable youths are often members of historically disenfranchised groups (e.g., racial/ethnic minority groups).

SWF has built an innovative program to match children and teenagers at risk for suicide with a licensed therapist in their community. This breakout session falls into the Programs that Work track and will show how SWF functions, including the referral process, therapist recruitment, and program evaluation. SWF has served over 4,700 youth since 2002. Using the Suicide Ideation Questionnaire to track outcomes, SWF youth have demonstrated significantly lower suicidal ideation over the course of their treatment.

Research has shown that practical barriers can reduce help-seeking during mental health crises. This makes youth from economically disadvantaged and underinsured families especially vulnerable. The SWF addresses this issue and consequently targets inequity in access to suicide prevention care. Additionally, SWF provides service regardless of citizenship or documentation status, which furthers their commitment to inclusivity. This presentation will engage the audience through powerpoint, open discussion and Q&A.