



# Out: Stigma – In: Increasing African American Postsecondary Students' Help-Seeking Behaviors

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Opening Remarks



# Learning Objectives

- ▶ Recognize the need and opportunity to develop and implement culturally relevant campaigns to reduce stigma regarding mental illness; prevent suicide; and promote help-seeking behaviors among African American postsecondary students
- ▶ Learn a method for outreach and consistent engagement with key African American postsecondary students
- ▶ Learn a method for conducting student-led mental health awareness and help-seeking behavior promotion campaigns
- ▶ Be able to identify and prepare for possible outcomes and roadblocks to implementing suicide prevention and help-seeking behavior programming for African American postsecondary students



# Agenda

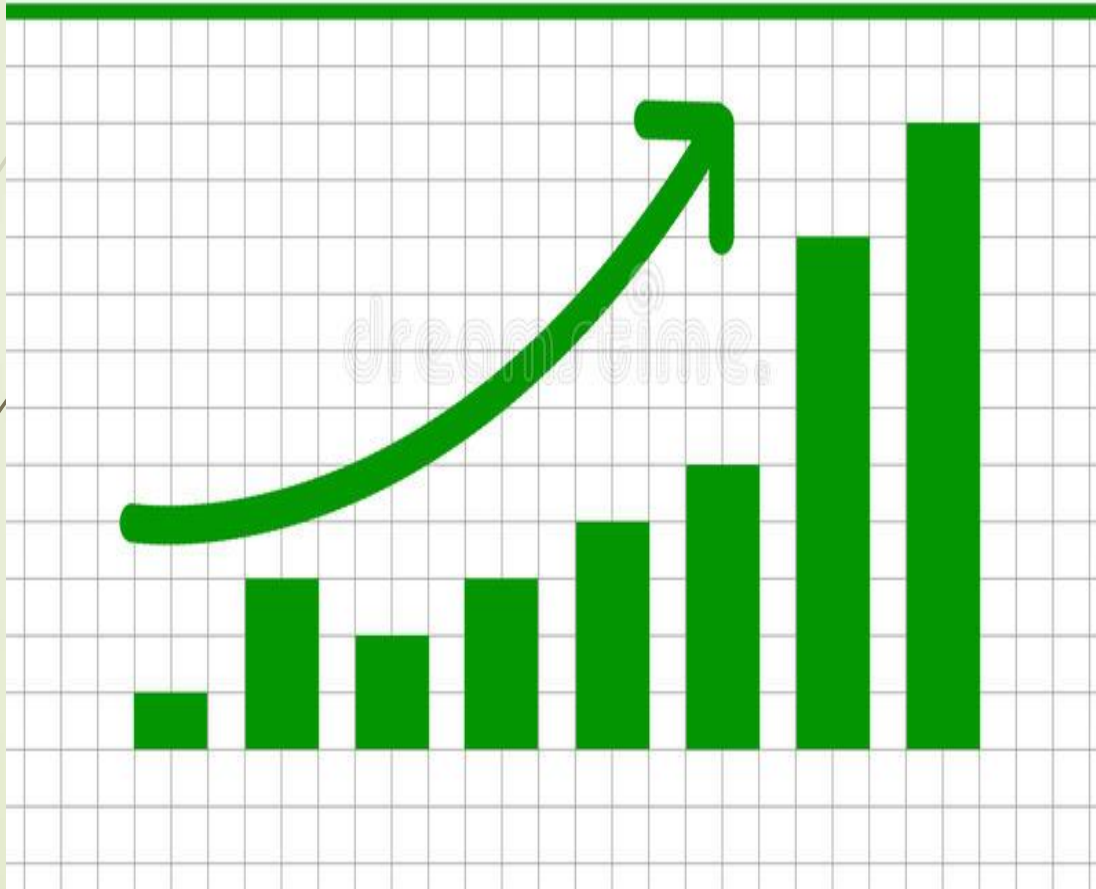
Let's Talk Increasing African American Postsecondary Students' Help-Seeking Behaviors.

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- Statistics
- Lower Rates of Help-Seeking Behaviors
- Sociocultural Underpinnings
- Strategies for Expanding Engagement
- Ethical Issues
- Outcomes and Road Blocks
- Questions & Answers



# UP TREND



## Mental Health & Suicide Statistics

- AAM: 3<sup>rd</sup> Leading COD,  $\leq 19$  y/o\*
- AAM: 4<sup>th</sup> Leading COD, 20-44 y/o\*
- AAF: 5<sup>th</sup> Leading COD,  $\leq 19$  y/o\*
- AAF: 6<sup>th</sup> leading COD, 20-44 y/o\*
- SPRC: 2019, Suicide rate for Black population was over half the overall U.S. suicide rate of 13.2%/100,000
- Only 1/3 of AAs receive needed mental health treatment (Day-Vines, 2007)

\*(CDC, 2017)



# What is Driving Lower Rates of Help-Seeking Behaviors among AA College Students?


- ▶ Center for Collegiate Mental Health (CCMH), Annual Report, 2019: 9.9% Clients Identified as African American
- ▶ Black college students significantly less frequently used psychological or social services and significantly more frequently used religious services (Ayalon & Young, 2010)
- ▶ Younger African Americans are less connected to churches than older generations (Pew Research Center, 2021)
- ▶ African Americans often receive poorer quality of care and lack access to culturally competent care
- ▶ Sociocultural factors



# Sociocultural Underpinnings

- Established Norms – help giving/care from church/family
- Cultural Beliefs – cultural mistrust of healthcare systems
- Faith – Strong socializing agents, faith will cure depressive symptoms; moral sway: suicide is a sin
- Suicide Disproportionately Impacts Whites





# **Other Possible Reasons for AA College Students' Lower Rates of Help-Seeking Behaviors**

- Stigma
- Lack of Health Insurance
- Inadequate Financial Resources
- Racial Microaggressions
- “One Size Fits all” Programming
- Lack of knowledge about mental health concerns



# Suicidal Risk and Protective Factors for African American College Students

- ▶ **Societal Factors**- Availability of lethal means, e.g., handguns\*\*
- ▶ **Geographic variation** – African American youth suicide has increased significantly in the South and Midwest over the last several decades\*\*
- ▶ **Community Factors** - Social isolation, low levels of support, and integration are higher indicators of vulnerability to depression and suicide among African Americans\*\*
- ▶ **Interpersonal Factors** – Strong religious beliefs are a key insulator from suicidal thoughts and actions;\*\* Participating in church services/activities increase social support, integration, and create a micro-society which may buffer suicidal thoughts and actions.\*\*
- ▶ **Individual Factors** – Age, sex, education, substance abuse and illicit drug use, history of diagnosis with mental disorders, social stigma; avoidance of mental health professionals and utilization of mental health services.\*\*



# Expanding Engagement

Some Potential Strategies.



- ▶ Educate faculty and staff on cultural risk and protective factors
- ▶ Expand screenings to consider racism, discrimination, and acculturation
- ▶ Invest in cultural adaptations of existing evidence-based protocols
- ▶ Identify structural barriers to delivery of care

# Competence

Attitude

Knowledge

Skills

- ▶ Ensure inclusivity of diverse samples and analyses of race and ethnicity
- ▶ Offer training in cultural competency and antiracist clinical care



## Develop, Support, and Promote Student-Led Trainings

- Meet with key AA campus organizations
- Offer psychoeducation trainings about mental illness
- Offer psychoeducation about the need for suicide prevention among AA students



- Encourage the promotion of protective processes and reducing risk factors
- Provide information regarding problem identification and referral services.
- Offer to provide needed training and ongoing support.





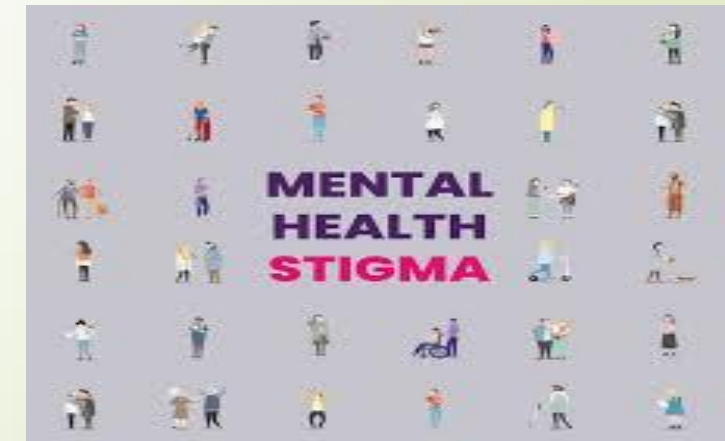
# Ethical Issues

Some Potential Ethical Concerns.

- Advocacy
- Culture
- Discrimination
- Diversity
- Multicultural/Diversity Competency
- Multicultural/Diversity Counseling
- Social Justice

# Obstacles & Roadblocks

CHANGE IS NEVER  
PAINFUL  
ONLY THE  
RESISTANCE  
TO CHANGE  
IS PAINFUL





# Closing Remarks

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# Questions & Answers

Thank You for your time  
and participation.