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Media Relations

October 22, 2015

UNH Receives Federal Grant to Increase Suicide Prevention Efforts

DURHAM, N.H. – Efforts to decrease the stigma around mental health and promote resources for suicide prevention will continue to expand at the University of New Hampshire thanks to a grant from the federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. The Garrett Lee Smith Campus Suicide Prevention Grant provides approximately \$100,000 a year for three years.

“The Counseling Center has been focused on suicide prevention across the university for many years but there is more work to be done to expand the safety net for our students,” said Sean Moundas, staff psychologist and assistant director for outreach and assessment at the center. “We want to eliminate the stigma and continue to open up dialogue, and this grant will help us do that.”

According to the national Campaign to Change Direction, which coordinates the [Know the 5 Signs](#) program, nearly 20 percent of people, or 42.5 million adults, in the United States has a mental health condition that meets the criteria for diagnosis. In addition, 50 percent of adults with a mental health condition have the disorder by age 14.

In particular, the grant will allow for expansion of the Kognito suicide prevention programs currently in use across the university; more programming on suicide prevention and mental health for students from under-represented/marginalized groups; development of a student group focused on mental health awareness and stigma reduction; assessment of mental health, safety and substance use services at UNH; as well as enhanced focus on suicide means restriction in partnership with campus and local police.

Kognito is an online training system that uses avatars to simulate conversations to help faculty, staff and students better identify and refer at-risk students. Currently the Counseling Center offers four programs: general ones geared to faculty/staff and students as well as ones that address specific groups, veterans and the LGBTQ community. With the grant, Moundas said the Counseling Center wants to add peer-to-peer training modules for the same specific groups.

“People can be understandably apprehensive about talking about and asking questions of someone about their mental health, and Kognito is a great introduction into how to start the conversation and how to access resources on campus,” Moundas said.

The [Kognito](#) programs are free and available to every member of the university and can be access via the [Counseling Center homepage](#). In addition, UNH is participating in the national Know the 5 Signs campaign that provides five signs someone may need help: their personality changes; they seem uncharacteristically angry, anxious, agitated or moody; they withdraw or isolate themselves; they stop taking care of themselves and may engage in risky behavior; they seem overcome with hopelessness and overwhelmed by their circumstances.

The [University of New Hampshire](#), founded in 1866, is a world-class public research university with the feel of a New England liberal arts college. A land, sea, and space-grant university, UNH is the state's flagship public institution, enrolling 13,000 undergraduate and 2,500 graduate students.

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