

Ohio Suicide Prevention Foundation offering interprofessional suicide prevention course at Kent State University Satellite Campuses

The Ohio Suicide Prevention Foundation (OSPF) and Kent State University (KSU) recently announced a new collaboration in which Kent State University will offer a new course centered on suicide prevention to both undergraduate and graduate students at the KSU at Ashtabula, Salem, and Tuscarawas campuses via a hybrid format. The course is being offered through KSU's new Bachelor of Social Work program but is open to all "helping" majors such as psychology, social work, public health, nursing, and even students studying law. We had the opportunity to speak with Austin Lucas, B.S., Program Director, for the Ohio Suicide Prevention Foundation, in which he expanded on the course, its history, and how other institutions of higher education can provide this invaluable opportunity for their students. Mr. Lucas explained that the OSPF received a grant from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration in 2015 to help reach the youth in Ohio. With that funding, and through collaboration with the University of Cincinnati, Old Dominion, and the University of North Carolina at Charlotte, this Interprofessional Education Suicide Prevention College Curriculum was created.

During our conversation with Mr. Lucas, we asked what he would say to students who may be on the fence about taking this course because they don't think the content will be applicable to their career. He answered with "Suicide is more common than people believe, the likelihood of interacting with someone in your professional career who is experiencing suicidal ideation is much higher than you may think. For instance, a nursing student who may not be interested in working in a psychiatric unit, may still come in contact with a patient who is at risk for suicide while administering a depression screening during a patient exam." and we couldn't agree more. We were curious what students could expect to gain from this course being offered on campus. Mr. Lucas explained that students who complete the course will gain an increase in confidence and competence when engaging with clients/patients/the community who are at risk for suicide on primary/secondary/tertiary levels. Students will also learn where to find additional training opportunities if they seek additional knowledge. Students will also gain experience working in interprofessional teams, as the course is based on interprofessional learning, and emphasizes different areas of interests and majors learning together so they can perform better in the field. Additionally, the campus as whole will benefit as the students will hopefully start conversations that lead to a reduction in stigma, an increase in suicide prevention resources and programming on campus, as well as affirming a culture of the importance of suicide prevention.

We are certainly interested in this course and the benefits it provides, and so are students at Kent State it seems. Mr. Lucas told us that there was only initially one course being offered, but it filled up so quickly that KSU decided to make a second course available for students who were interested in taking the class. So how can other institutions of higher education bring this Interprofessional Education Suicide Prevention College Curriculum to their campus? Campuses will need a champion with interest to assist the OSPF with the implementation process. The

OSPF will begin the process by going over the basics and discussing the syllabus with the interested campus. The OSPF also provides the necessary materials to teach the course, which includes lecture PowerPoints, research articles, ideas for projects in the course, etc. Students are asked to complete an anonymous pre and post survey to assess their suicide prevention before and after completing the course, this data will also be made available to the campus. Course instructors are also asked to fill out a post-survey about information such as how many students were from each major area, how many credit hours the class was worth, what format was the class offered in, etc., which helps improve the course for future offerings. Mr. Lucas has asked that any interested stakeholders reach out to him directly via email at austin.lucas@ohiospf.org to discuss bringing the course to their campus. He is also available to help with technical assistance and to connect campuses with the original implementation team if they are interested. Mr. Lucas was also a presenter at the Ohio Program for Campus Safety and Mental Health 6th Biennial Conference: Reimagining Campus-CommUNITY Partnerships: Breaking Down the Silos on May 18th, 2023, and his presentation covered this very topic. Those interested in his presentation can find an audio recording [here](#).

To wrap up our conversation, we asked what else the Ohio Suicide Prevention Foundation has been doing to work with institutions of higher education in Ohio. Mr. Lucas let us know that the OSPF has worked on a suicide prevention plan for the entire state of Ohio, which is not limited to but includes higher education. The suicide prevention plan outlines goals and objectives for each setting and included this course in those goals. The organization also provides technical assistance and numerous training opportunities throughout the year. The Ohio Program for Campus Safety and Mental Health is proud to call the Ohio Suicide Prevention Foundation a partner and looks forward to seeing their continued efforts to prevent suicide and reduce stigma.