Challenges and Capacities for Libraries Supporting Rural Health

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2 projects

School Libraries Anchoring Rural Mental Health

● 2017-2019
● Goals
  ○ Assess the capacities of rural school libraries for community mental health support
● Partners
  ○ Missouri Association of School Libraries
  ○ Missouri Association of Rural Education
  ○ Missouri School Counselors Association

Librarians as Catalysts for Healthy Communities (C4CH)

● 2019 - 2022
● Goals
  ○ Interdisciplinary HSL program
  ○ Recruit diverse students who remain in their communities
● Partners:
  ○ iSchool
  ○ NNLM-MCR
  ○ J. Otto Lottes Health Sciences Library
  ○ Community partners
Project 1: Rural Mental Health Project

- Mental health is a serious problem
- Suicide is the second leading cause of teen death
- More people die by suicide in rural areas
- Rural communities lack mental health care
- Rural schools serve as the de facto children’s mental health system

**SUICIDE SURPASSED HOMICIDE TO BECOME SECOND-LEADING CAUSE OF DEATH FOR TEENAGERS, AGES 15-19, IN THE UNITED STATES**

**CHILDMN IN RURAL AREAS**

**WITH MENTAL, BEHAVIORAL, AND DEVELOPMENTAL DISORDERS MAY NEED**
- Better access to mental health care for children and parents
- Programs that support parents
- Opportunities to learn, play, and socialize

How can rural school librarians serve as community anchors to support mental health and wellness?

Methods:

● 4 Focus Groups with 14 school librarians
● Member checking
● Grounded theory
  ○ Transcript Analysis
  ○ Code for theme
    ■ Overarching themes
    ■ Strengths

Credit: Saul Albert, June 1, 2017.
THEME 1: RESOURCES
THEME 2: CHALLENGES
THEME 3: DESIRES
THEME 4: EXAMPLES TO FOLLOW
Resources and Challenges

Theme 1: Resources

● Providing nonfiction resources is challenging.
● High-interest fiction materials have more use than non-fiction.
● The school library serves as a safe space for students.

Theme 2: Challenges

● School librarians do not feel comfortable providing mental health support.
● Mental health stigma can deter students’ access to resources.
Desires and Examples

Theme 3: Desires

● School librarians want:
  ○ more training
  ○ Better resources
● School librarians and counselors are overworked

→ Partnerships!

Theme 4: Examples to Follow

● Harper’s Ethic of Care Model
● Socio-Emotional Learning Models

School-based mental health programs are focused on ameliorating existing problems rather than maintaining student health.
Conclusions and Implications

● School librarians need more support and education in this area

Role of the school librarian:
● Ethic of Care (Harper, 2017; Rubinstein 2012)
● Safe Spaces (Brewster, 2013; Takahashi, 2017)
● Collections and Informational Resources (Harper, 2017)
   ○ Bibliotherapy (Cornett & Cornett, 1980)

● School librarians are key stakeholders in improving literacy and information literacy – why not also health information literacy and mental health information literacy?

● Curricular Changes: Preparing our students to deal with mental health issues and to use their professional skills in supporting students, teachers, and counselors
Project 2: Catalysts for Community Health

- New Project (in recruitment phase)
- Students will remain in situ:
  - Underserved rural AND urban areas
- Community Partners from libraries and health/wellness environments
- Interdisciplinary MLIS: includes classes in bioinformatics, Health Professions
Aims:

- Create information and curricular resources for health and wellbeing in LIS
- Develop health information outreach and programming skills
- Train student cohort to lead community health information networks
- Expand a community empowerment framework to library education

Community Empowerment Framework

- Partner with local organizations; students work part time throughout program. Intentionally cross-disciplinary
- Use an “established structure of self-governance” including Community Advisory Board
- Work with NNLM, across MU departments, with community
- All of Us coordinators
- Mentoring program

Helm, Jelly. Wikipedia Community Collage. 
Curricular Changes

Work with Health Medical Informatics Department and School of Health Professions to modify existing courses to meet MLIS, Programmatic Needs of C4CH
Project Similarities

- Focus on underserved areas
- Increasing librarians’ comfort with health issues
- Developing curricular interventions for LIS students related to health issues
- Community empowerment/embedded information work
- Partnerships
Q&A

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For additional information:

Rural School Libraries: https://schoolmentalhealth.missouri.edu

Librarians as Catalysts for Healthy Communities: https://c4ch.missouri.edu