May is Mental Health Awareness Month:

The Case for Mental Health Supports in Schools

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), in partnership with the Now is the Time (NITT) Technical Assistance Center, developed an issue brief entitled "Mental Health and Academic Achievement" that highlights the importance of mental health supports in schools (the following is excerpted from that issue brief).

"*Approximately **1 in 6** school-aged youth experiences **impairments in life functioning due to a mental illness**, and the number of young people experiencing mental illness increases as young people grow older (Perou et al., 2013). The most prevalent mental illnesses in school-aged young people include attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), behavioral or conduct problems, anxiety, and depression (Perou et al., 2013). **Half of mental illnesses emerge during or before adolescence**, and three-quarters emerge before the age of 25, meaning that mental illness places a disproportionate burden on young people, yet **fewer than half of young people with mental illness receive adequate treatment** (Kessler et al., 2007). When left untreated or undertreated, coping with the pain of mental illness can contribute to self-harm, including thoughts of **suicide**, which is now the **second leading cause of death** for young people ages 10-24 (CDC, 2014). Fortunately, the earlier mental health concerns are detected and addressed, the more likely the young person is to avoid the onset and/or progression of a mental illness (Baskin et al., 2010). Outside of the young person's home, **schools are the most likely place where mental health concerns will be detected**. Young people spend most of their day at school interacting with several adults and peers, all of whom can be empowered to help connect those suffering from mental health concerns to early intervention and treatment supports.*"

Throughout the month of May, Project AWARE Ohio will release 5 e-newsletters that highlight resources that can assist you in providing mental health supports to your students, beginning with our mental health screening resource (below).

Mental Health, Social-Emotional, and Behavioral Screening in Schools

Although up to 27% of youth experience externalizing behavior problems, depression, and anxiety, only one-sixth to one-third receive mental health treatment (Weist et al., 2007). Considering that unaddressed mental health concerns can contribute to deleterious consequences, the New Freedom Commission on Mental Health (2003) identified mental health screening as one of six goals for transforming mental health care. Unfortunately, data suggest that only 2-3% of schools engage in mental health screening, and those that do may not use the data to inform effective intervention (Vannest, 2012).

To assist schools in improving their mental health screening practices, Project AWARE Ohio developed the Mental Health, Social-Emotional, and Behavioral Screening and Evaluation Compendium to provide mental health practitioners with the information about no-cost and low-cost mental health, social-emotional, and behavioral screening tools for children and adolescents. This resource includes comprehensive information about 90 different instruments. For a full discussion about the usefulness of this resource, please consult the compendium, screening guidance document, and webinar.

All of our Project AWARE Ohio resources can be found at: http://resources.oberlinkconsulting.com/

The Project AWARE Ohio team includes partners in 3 county ESCs. If you are from those local areas and want more information about Project AWARE services, please contact:

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