

# Youth Suicide Prevention and Trauma-informed Practices for Pre-Service Educators in Pennsylvania

Executive Summary





## Background & Overview

The McDowell Institute was awarded external funding from Fall 2017 through the end of Fall 2021 to enhance the capacity of educator preparatory programs in the commonwealth to prepare future teachers to provide support to students experiencing emotional distress or crises. The original focus of this initiative was to build capacity at participating educator preparatory programs to situate sustainable youth suicide prevention training within their curricula. As this initiative grew, the focus was expanded to include sustainable professional development on adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), trauma, and trauma-informed practices.

Throughout this initiative, 27 institutions of higher education (IHEs) formally participated in an array of capacity-building endeavors. This number represents close to one-third of all educator preparatory programs in the Commonwealth.

- **Arcadia University**
- **Bloomsburg University**
- **Bucknell University**
- **Cabrini University**
- **California University of PA**
- **Chatham University**
- **Clarion University**
- **DeSales University**
- **Drexel University**
- **East Stroudsburg University**
- **Eastern University**
- **Edinboro University**
- **Elizabethtown College**
- **Gannon University**
- **Holy Family University**
- **Indiana University of PA**
- **Kutztown University**
- **Lock Haven University**
- **Luzerne County Community College**
- **Messiah College**
- **Penn State Harrisburg**
- **Point Park University**
- **Shippensburg University**
- **Slippery Rock University**
- **Saint Joseph's University**
- **University of Valley Forge**
- **York College of PA**



## Supports Provided to Participating IHEs

The primary support provided to IHEs was ongoing technical assistance concerning curricular enhancements to their preparatory programs. Additionally, each IHE received jump-start funds to enhance their training capacity at their respective institution. Each IHE targeted two types of outcomes during the final year of this initiative. The first outcome reflected required commitments, while the second type reflected a menu of options from which participating IHEs selected, at a minimum, two additional targeted outcomes.

## Required Targeted Outcomes Across all IHEs

- Establishment, continuation, and expansion of youth suicide prevention training.
- Utilization of materials disseminated via the McDowell Institute on adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), trauma and trauma-informed practices.
- Engagement in Pennsylvania's Community of Practice on School-based Behavioral Health (CoP SBBH).
- Engagement in the Higher Education Suicide Prevention Coalition (HESPC).

## Menu of Additional Targeted Outcomes


- Submission of application to the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) to operate the PDE Endorsement on Social-Emotional-Behavioral Wellness for PK-12 Students.
- Installation of social emotional learning (SEL) content within targeted preparatory program curricula.
- Installation of universal screening content within targeted preparatory program curricula.
- Installation of bullying prevention content within targeted preparatory program curricula.
- Installation of substance-abuse prevention content within targeted preparatory program curricula.



# Capacity Built Across Participating IHEs

This initiative has built a great deal of capacity across participating IHEs. Further, the capacity at each respective IHE is sustainable beyond the time frame of this initiative.

## Youth Suicide Prevention Training

	Number of faculty credentialed as YMHFA Instructors	Number of Pre-service Educators who Completed YMHFA Training	Number of faculty credentialed as QPR Instructors	Number of Pre-service Educators who Completed QPR Training	Number of Pre-service Educators who Completed Kognito Training
<b>Fall 2017 through Fall 2021</b>	<b>95</b>	<b>5,163</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>2,603</b>	<b>1,192</b>

**YMHFA:** Youth Mental Health First Aid

**QPR:** Question – Persuade – Refer

**Kognito:** Asynchronous virtual youth suicide prevention training

## ACEs, Trauma, & Trauma-Informed Practices

<b>Capacity-building Activity Type</b>	<b># of IHEs</b>
Resources from reputable sources on ACEs and trauma situated within preparatory programs	<b>27</b>
Explicit content on Social Emotional Learning / PA Career Ready Skills situated within preparatory programs	<b>11</b>
Approved to offer the PDE Social, Emotional, Behavioral Wellness Endorsement PK-12 Students	<b>8</b>
Explicit training on ACEs and trauma situated within preparatory programs	<b>8</b>
Explicit content on Universal Screening situated within preparatory programs	<b>8</b>
Explicit content on Bullying Prevention situated within preparatory programs	<b>4</b>
Explicit content on substance use prevention situated within preparatory programs	<b>2</b>

# Appendix: YMHFA Highlights

Pre-service Educator Responses to Initial Voluntary Follow-up Survey Post Training

<i>Item</i>	<i>Strongly Agree/Agree</i>		<i>Strongly Disagree/Disagree</i>	
	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>
1) As a result of YMHFA training, I am more aware of how social, emotional, and behavioral matters might influence student learning.	<b>1,086</b>	<b>93.9%</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>6.1%</b>
2) As a result of YMHFA training, I am more aware of my own social, emotional and behavioral health and well-being.	<b>1,046</b>	<b>90.5%</b>	<b>110</b>	<b>9.5%</b>
3) As a result of YMHFA training, I am better able to recognize the signs that a student may be experiencing a mental health challenge.	<b>1,085</b>	<b>93.9%</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>6.1%</b>
4) As a result of YMHFA training, I am better able to effectively reach out to a student who may be experiencing a mental health challenge.	<b>1,079</b>	<b>93.3%</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>6.7%</b>
5) As a result of YMHFA training, I am better able to assess for risk of immediate harm when interacting with a student who appears to be experiencing a mental health challenge.	<b>1,072</b>	<b>92.7%</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>7.3%</b>
6) As a result of YMHFA training, I am better able actively and compassionately listen in a non-judgmental manner to a student in distress.	<b>1,081</b>	<b>93.5%</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>6.5%</b>
7) As a result of YMHFA training, I am better able to offer a student who appears distressed basic “first aid” level mental health information and reassurance.	<b>1,078</b>	<b>93.3%</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>6.7%</b>
8) As a result of YMHFA training, I am better able to assist a student who is experiencing a mental health problem or crisis seek professional help.	<b>1,080</b>	<b>93.4%</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>6.6%</b>
9) As a result of YMHFA training, I am better able to assist a student who may be experiencing a mental health problem or crisis to connect with appropriate community, peer and personal support.	<b>1,078</b>	<b>93.3%</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>6.7%</b>
10) As a result of YMHFA training, I am more aware of my own views and feelings about mental health problems and disorders and how my views and feelings can influence my interactions with my students.	<b>1,065</b>	<b>92.1%</b>	<b>91</b>	<b>7.9%</b>
11) As a result of YMHFA training, I am better able to ask a student whether s/he is considering self-injury and/or suicide.	<b>1,070</b>	<b>92.6%</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>7.4%</b>
12) Based on my experiences with initial YMHFA training, I feel sufficiently prepared to provide mental health first aid to a student at school or in the community.	<b>1,070</b>	<b>92.6%</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>7.4%</b>

N=1,156 out of 5,163 pre-service educators that completed YMHFA training through this initiative responded to this initial voluntary survey (22%).

# Application of YMHFA with PreK-12 Students by Pre-service Educators

Number of PK-12 students with whom YMHFA was applied?	n	%
<b>0</b>	<b>315</b>	<b>46.8%</b>
<b>1-2</b>	<b>280</b>	<b>41.6%</b>
<b>3-4</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>9.1%</b>
<b>5 or more</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>2.5%</b>

Note 1: N= 673 out of the original 1,156 voluntary respondents to the initial survey responded to this second follow-up survey concerning application of YMHFA

Note 2: More than one-half (53.2%) of these 673 pre-service educators reported applying YMHFA with at least one PK-12 student within six months of completing YMHFA training.

## McDowell Institute: Fostering Wellness Through Education

The McDowell Institute supports the facilitation of social, emotional, and behavioral wellness of children, youth, and young adults across school and community settings. This mission is accomplished through training, technical assistance, and information dissemination. The Institute currently operates numerous aligned initiatives to achieve this mission.

One of these initiatives was the Trauma-informed Practices for Pre-service Educators and Related Human Service Providers in Pennsylvania, as reflected in this report. You are encouraged to go to the McDowell Institute’s website (

) to learn more about additional outreach endeavors.

### Alignment with State-wide Initiatives

The McDowell Institute is a collaborating partner in the operation of the Community of Practice on School-based Behavioral Health (CoP SBBH). The CoP SBBH is comprised of a cross-sector of stakeholders that share a commitment to the advancement of early childhood and school-age social, emotional, and behavioral wellness within the commonwealth. The emphasis of the CoP SBBH is on promoting partnerships that reflect the application of multi-tiered logic and evidenced-based multi-tiered systems of support through two aligned strategies: Strategy 1 - Continued scale-up of the PBIS framework with fidelity through the outreach endeavors of the Pennsylvania Positive Behavior Support (PA PBS) Network across the commonwealth, and Strategy 2 - Alignment of evidence-based,

trauma-informed approaches to build protective factors and enhance social emotional wellbeing to reduce or mitigate risk factors associated with substance misuse and youth suicide equitably across early childhood and school-age programs. Implementation of this four-year initiative to enhance pre-service educator and related human service provider training aligns with the priorities of the CoP SBBH. Further, implementation of this initiative as reflected in this report aligns with the priorities denoted in the Trauma-informed PA: A Plan to Make Pennsylvania a Trauma-informed, Healing-Centered State (

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