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Topic: A Mixed-methods Effectiveness Evaluation of Youth Mental Health First Aid in Rural Mountain States

Project Summary

Youth in rural communities experience disproportionately higher rates of suicidality than their urban and suburban counterparts due in part to risk factors related to limited access to appropriate mental health services. These problems are especially evident across states in the Mountain West (i.e., Colorado, Montana, New Mexico and Wyoming), also known as the “suicide belt,” where rates of youth suicide are the highest in the contiguous 48 states. This mixed-methods study aims to explore whether Youth Mental Health First Aid (YMHFA) matches the unique cultural and environmental factors affecting educators working with youth in rural Mountain West communities. This project will use questionnaires and focus groups to examine improvements in learners’ mental health literacy, attitudes toward mental health, confidence levels and help-seeking behaviors before and after participating in the program. It will also assess the appropriateness, feasibility and acceptability of YMHFA according to non-mental health professionals working in the rural Mountain West.