Behavioral Health 101 for Your Community

The Situation
NDSU Extension Community Listening Forums held during the fall of 2015 provided an opportunity for North Dakotans across the state to share their concerns. More than 300 people participated in 11 community forums. The need to “convene conversations to address addictions and mental and physical health challenges” appeared high on the list of priorities under the heading healthy citizens.

Extension Response
Partnering with Prairie St. John’s, NDSU Extension-Human Development and Family Science offered a 3-hour workshop via IVN on March 30th, 2016. The topics included Mental illness: common psychiatric diagnoses, signs and symptoms in children, adolescents and adults, and autism. Substance abuse; addiction, common substances, effects of use. Suicide prevention; warning signs and learning how to intervene.

Impacts
To date there have been 186 individuals including 12 law enforcement officers, social workers/counselors, school teachers/youth workers, Extension agents, clergy, addiction counselors, parent educators/aides, school counselors and health care workers, participating from 17 sites around the state.

- 86% of participants agreed the information will be helpful for them
- 92.7% felt the instructors were well prepared and helpful

Participants were asked to rate their knowledge or ability on a scale of 1 to 5 before and after the INV training to each of seven questions. In each instance, the difference was significant.

- Understanding of common mental illness diagnoses and symptoms.
- Ability to recognize potential mental health concerns and take steps to assist or refer for support.
- Understanding of autism and how to approach it.
- Awareness of substance use concerns and specific addiction issues.
- My ability to recognize a substance use concern and need for further support.
- My understanding of warning signs that someone may have suicidal feelings, thoughts or intent.
- Ability to take steps for intervention or support if an individual shows suicidal thoughts or signs.

Feedback
“The presentations were very well organized and provided very useful information to take forward.”

“Good information. Wish we could have had more conversations about these topics.”

“I plan to be more “cautious” when dealing with students who are “misbehaving”.

“Now that I am more familiar with signs and symptoms I can respond appropriately to those considering harming themselves. I will review resources within our local communities to aid the mental health crisis.”

“I appreciate having evidence-based education and resources from professionals working within ND.”

“I liked the resources listed as well as the simple exercises that everyone can utilize.”

Public Value Statement
Mental and behavioral health challenges can be reduced by educating people about warning signs and services available.

Primary Contact
Kim Bushaw
Family Science Specialist
383 EML Hall, NDSU
218-231-7450
kim.bushaw@ndsu.edu