

## **Tier 3: Upstream Suicide Prevention**

Northwest Pennsylvania Veteran Suicide Prevention Program

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#### Introduction to **Upstream Prevention**





#### What is Upstream Prevention?

- Policies promoting mental health awareness and advocacy
- Mental Health Parity- equal treatment of mental health conditions and substance use disorders in insurance plans





#### Why is Upstream Prevention Important?

- **Prevention:** Approximately 90% of people who died by suicide had a diagnosable mental health condition at the time of death.
- **Cost:** Mental health treatment costs the US upwards of \$200 billion per year, yet as few as half of patients who are diagnosed receive treatment.
- Impact of COVID-19: High demand for mental health care during a time when there is a shortage of mental health care professionals.

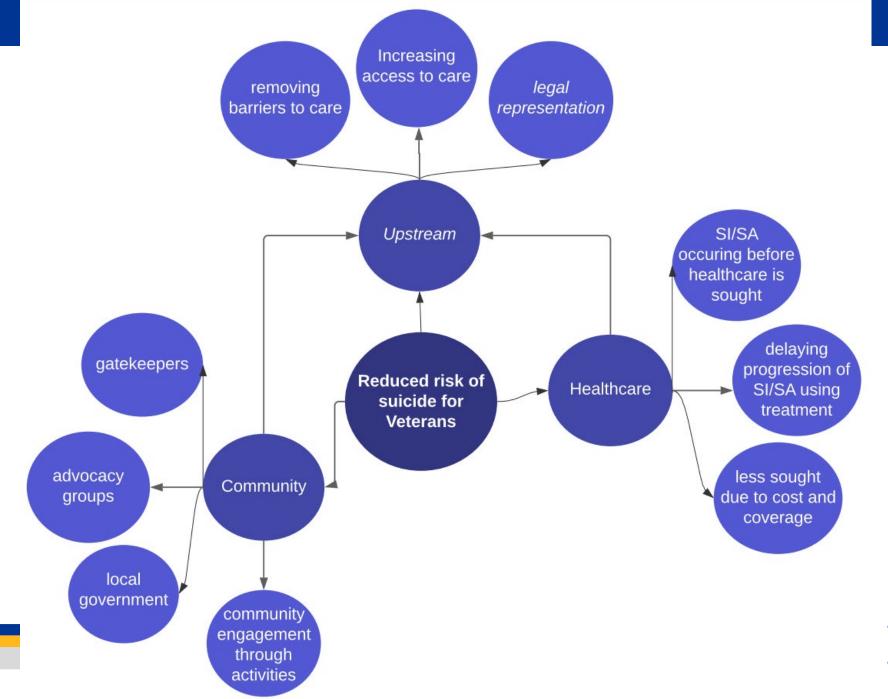




# **Upstream Connections with Healthcare and Community**









#### **Mental Health Parity Law**

- Federal Mental Health Parity and Addition Equity Act (2008)
- Affordable Care Act (2010) extended coverage to more insurance plans
- Federal Parity Law does not apply to Medicare or the VA
- Systematic barriers to mental health care still exist





#### Pennsylvania on Mental Health Parity Law

- PA has not adopted the federal parity law in its entirety
  - Does not mandate insurance plans to offer MH/SUD benefits
  - Under ACA, small group plans must offer MH/SUD benefits
- Act 106
  - Requires minimum coverage for alcohol and substance abuse treatment whether you have a large or small group health insurance plan
  - If your current plan offers more coverage, you are entitled to the greater coverage due to the Federal Parity Law





#### Milliman Report (2019)

MILLIMAN RESEARCH REPORT

### Addiction and mental health vs. physical health: Widening disparities in network use and provider reimbursement

A deeper analytical dive and updated results through 2017 for 37 million employees and dependents

Commissioned by Mental Health Treatment and Research Institute LLC, a not-for-profit subsidiary of

The Bowman Family Foundation

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## National Organizations on Mental Health Parity





#### **American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP)**

- Supports the passage of comprehensive state-level parity reporting legislation with the goal of implementing federal and state parity laws nation-wide
- Provides educational resources (e.g., how to file a parity appeal)
- AFSP Public Policy Team in D.C.
  - Maintains connections with policy makers and stakeholders in states that have adopted parity reporting laws





#### **National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI)**

- Supports policies that ensure mental health parity
- Supports comprehensive coverage without limits on treatment
- Provides educational resources through infographics, videos, and news about mental health parity
- Mental Health and Substance Use Disorder Parity Task Force





#### The Kennedy Forum

 Partners with healthcare providers, mental health advocates, policymakers, and business leaders to eliminate issues of stigma, guarantee equal access to care, and help consumers understand their rights







#### **Medical-Legal Partnerships (MLPs)**

- Attorneys partnered with medical teams (i.e., VA)
- Lawyers train VA health care teams to screen Veterans for unmet legal and social needs
- Medical teams refer Veterans to on-site legal clinics





#### Medical-Legal Partnerships (MLPs) Cont'd

- Lawyers provide pro bono services for noncriminal cases
  - Counseling on insurance, Veterans benefits, financial debt/crisis, income support, etc.
  - Address legal issues that directly affect Veterans' mental health (i.e., stress)





#### **Veterans Treatment Courts**

- Assist Veterans with substance use disorder and mental health conditions who encounter the justice system
  - Courts in NW PA include Erie, Butler, Beaver, Mercer, and Armstrong counties
- Veterans come before judges who are familiar with their cases and are connected to programs, benefits, and services





#### How Stakeholders Can Implement Upstream Prevention





#### **Campus Outreach in Implementation Region**

- Researched college campuses across the 15 counties in NW PA for existing organizations focused on Veterans or Mental Health Advocacy
- Identified 19 colleges throughout the 15 counties
- Next Steps: identifying student Veterans' representatives who can identify further connections to Veterans





#### **Discussion**

- 1. Can the Program adopt some of these practices?
  - What works?
  - What is not feasible?
- 2. Can implementing upstream interventions begin with engaging lawyers before policy makers?
- 3. How can we engage judges in suicide prevention in Veterans Treatment Courts?





#### **Pennsylvania Resources**

- Administrative Office of Pennsylvania Courts (AOPC)
  - Problem Solving Courts
  - Common Pleas President Judges
- Pennsylvania District Attorneys Association
- Special Court Judges Association of Pennsylvania
- County Criminal Justice Advisory Boards (CJABs)
- Suicide Prevention Lifeline 988 Launch





#### **National Resources**

- American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP)
- National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI)
  - 988: Reimagining Crisis Response
- The Kennedy Forum





#### References

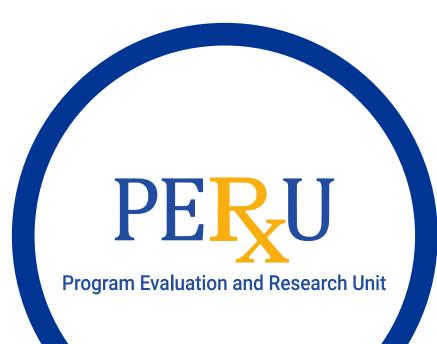
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