

Demonstrating the Effectiveness and Quality of Umatter[®] Suicide Prevention Gatekeeper and Training of Trainers

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Umatter[®] Suicide Prevention Gatekeeper

The Center for Health and Learning (CHL) conducted a Umatter[®] Suicide Prevention Gatekeeper training during Spring 2021. Umatter[®] Gatekeeper is a component of Umatter[®] for Schools, a national best-practice program. The goal of the Gatekeeper training is to increase knowledge, comfort, and skills to address suicide prevention within participants' organizations or communities. Participants learn basic knowledge and skills of suicide prevention, including societal myths and attitudes, use of sensitive language, risk and protective factors, considerations for populations at risk, warning signs, what to say and do, and local and national resources for help. Participants use behavioral practice techniques to apply the 3-Step Intervention Process for talking with someone who is at suicidal risk. The training includes discussion of best practices for suicide prevention in school and/or community settings. A separate training provides opportunity for prevention and postvention protocol review and development.

The Spring 2021 training was attended by 38 total participants. Attendees included those who received training in Umatter[®] for Schools and also a standalone Gatekeeper training for Woodstock Area Jewish Community. The training was evaluated using a pre/post survey design that assessed participant knowledge regarding suicide prevention and resources, and their preparedness and concerns supporting youth and adult mental health before trainees took the training and again upon completion. The pre-survey was taken by 18 participants (48%), and the post-survey was taken by 8 attendees (21%). While the low participation rate in the post-survey does introduce some error, the number of respondents and response rate are high enough to adequately measure changes in participants' knowledge, attitudes, and behavior from pre to post.

FINDINGS

Knowledge Gains

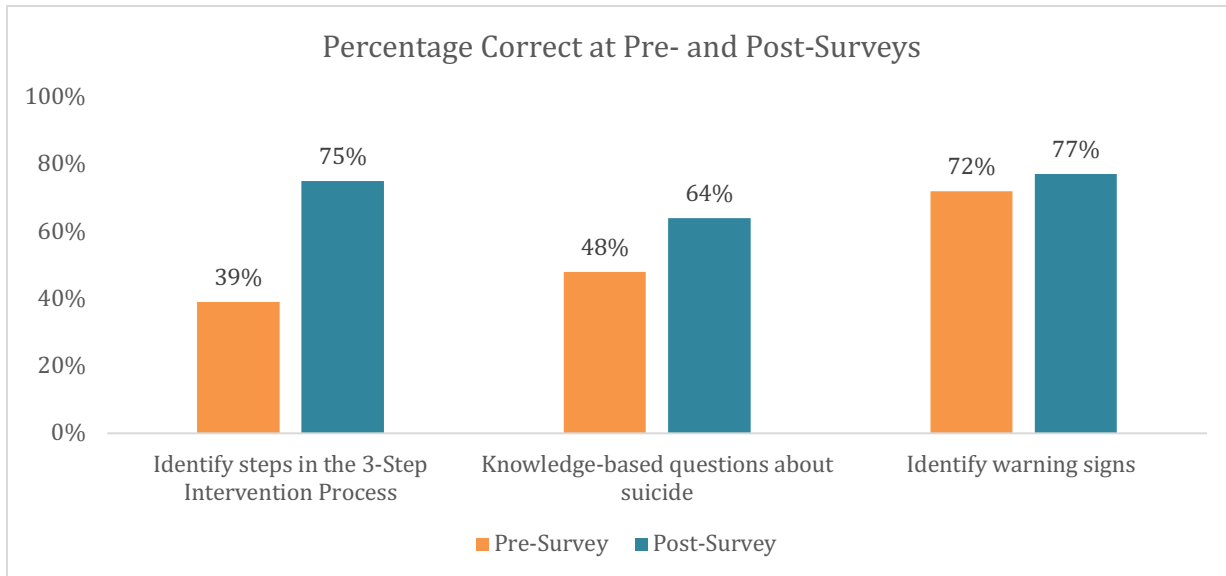
Participants exhibited gains in knowledge as a result of participating in the Umatter[®] Gatekeeper training. Respondents were given a series of eight questions that focused on demographic groups most likely to attempt or die by suicide, the most common cause of suicide, and related topics. On average, participants answered 48% of questions correctly on the pre-survey and this increased to 64% on the post-survey.

There were two questions on which participants exhibited particularly large shifts from answering incorrectly on the pre-survey to answering correctly on the post-survey. The first was, "Over ___ percentage of people who die by suicide had or met criteria for a mental health diagnosis at their time of death?" Only 17% of respondents chose the correct answer on the pre-survey, while 63% selected the right answer on the post-survey. Similarly, when respondents were asked whether it was true or false that women are more likely than others to attempt suicide, 44% answered correctly at baseline and 88% of participants answered correctly on the post-survey.

Respondents also exhibited knowledge gains regarding the 3-Step Intervention Process and warning signs for suicide. When participants were given a list of five choices for components of the 3-Step Intervention Process – a best practice for suicide prevention – 39% were able to correctly identify the steps on the pre-survey. On the post-survey, this number increased to 75%. Equipping participants with this knowledge is a means to making them more effective at helping people who may have suicidal thoughts or desires. Meanwhile, participants' knowledge gains

about warning signs for suicide increased, but to a much smaller degree. While respondents correctly identified 72% of warning signs from a list of seven options on the pre-survey, this proportion increased to 77% on the post-survey.

Figure 1. Knowledge Gains



Changes in Attitudes and Access to Resources

Trainees indicated that participating in the Umatter® Gatekeeper training helped them overcome most of the barriers that discouraged them from reaching out to students. The pre- and post-surveys provided respondents with a list of nine barriers that might impede them from reaching out to students. In the pre-survey, half of respondents (50%) picked at least one barrier. The most commonly picked barriers were “fear of saying the wrong thing,” (39%) and “respect for the privacy of students” (28%). On the post-survey, only a quarter of respondents (25%) said that any of the nine barriers listed would discourage them from reaching out to a student, and no respondents selected more than one barrier.

The only barrier to reaching out to students that participants selected on the post-survey was “fear of saying the wrong thing.”

Table 1. Changes in Attitudes

Barrier	% Selected at Pre-Survey	% Selected at Post-Survey	Change
Respect for the privacy of the student	28%	0%	-28%
Worry about embarrassing the student	17%	0%	-17%
Fear of saying the wrong thing	39%	25%	-14%
Not qualified	11%	0%	-11%

Fear that asking directly about suicide will give them the idea	6%	0%	-6%
Afraid of the burden of helping someone in distress	6%	0%	-6%
Think asking about it would make it more overwhelming	6%	0%	-6%
Do not want to get over-involved/over-committed	6%	0%	-6%
Worry about embarrassing myself	0%	0%	0%

Beyond helping participants overcome barriers, another outcome of the training is to encourage trainees to add suicide prevention resources to their phones. On the survey, participants were presented with a list of five resources and asked which they had easy access to in their phones.

At the start of the training, 44% of participants indicated that they had three or more of the resources listed in their phones. The most popular ones were 911 (89%) and the crisis text line (50%). At the conclusion of the training, almost two-thirds of participants (63%) reported that they had three or more of the resources listed in their phones. The largest shift was in the proportion who had the Trevor Lifeline stored in their phones. Specifically, this grew from 0% at the pre-survey to 63% at the post-survey.

Findings indicate that the Gatekeeper Training effectively prompted participants to add quick access to suicide prevention resources in their phones.

Table 2. Changes in Access to Resources

Resource	% Selected at Pre-Survey	% Selected at Post-Survey	Change
Trevor Lifeline	0%	63%	+63%
National Suicide Prevention Lifeline	28%	75%	+47%
Crisis text line	50%	88%	+38%
911	89%	100%	+11%
Poison control	39%	38%	-1%

Umatter® Training of Trainers

The Center for Health and Learning conducted a Umatter® Training of Trainers training. This was the first time this training was offered virtually in two 3-hour sessions on April 27th and May, 2021.

The objectives of the Umatter® Training of Trainers training include the following:

- Review and demonstrate suicide prevention Gatekeeper skills.
- Deliver at least two modules of a suicide prevention awareness session within the training.
- Identify challenges and next steps for implementing an awareness session for staff or parents.
- Prepare and practice responding to difficult questions, situations, and group dynamics.
- Demonstrate an understanding of culturally competent practice with groups at risk, e.g., LGBTQ, elderly, Indigenous, MIMY (Men In Middle Years), those living with disabilities and/or mental illness.
- Offer and receive feedback regarding presentations.

The training was attended by 22 participants. The training was evaluated in two ways:

1. **Satisfaction survey** administered at the conclusion of the training to assess participants' perceptions of the quality of the training through open- and closed-ended questions (n=17, 78% of attendees).
2. **Pre/post surveys** that assessed participants' confidence in various areas related to leading a Umatter® training before and after completing the training. The pre-survey was taken by 16 participants (73%), and the post-survey was taken by 13 attendees (59%).

FINDINGS

Participant Satisfaction

Trainees reported very high levels of satisfaction with the Umatter® Training of Trainers training. When asked to rate the overall quality of the training, 77% of respondents rated the training as “excellent,” while the remaining 23% chose “good.” No participants selected “fair” or “poor.” Almost half of participants (47%) said the training exceeded their expectations and the same proportion said it met their expectations. One participant (6%) indicated that the training did not meet their expectations. A large majority of participants (88%) rated the workshop as “very” or “extremely useful.” When asked to describe what aspects of the training they found most useful, several respondents commented that the breakout sessions, opportunities to practice, and discussions with other trainees were highlights of the training. A few participants also expressed that they appreciated the resources that facilitators shared with attendees.

Regarding ways to improve the training, almost a third of participants (29%) rated the training as “somewhat clear” or “somewhat unclear,” and a couple of participants stated in open-ended

Table 3. Overall Rating

How would you rate the overall training?	
Excellent	77%
Good	23%
Fair	0%
Poor	0%

responses that there was a lack of clarity sometimes. These individuals requested clearer instructions before going into breakout groups and suggested arranging the training differently by performing the entire course first with new trainers as the audience.

Changes in Participant Confidence

Respondents reported that participating in the Umatter® Training of Trainers training boosted their confidence in an array of areas relevant to facilitating Umatter® trainings. The pre- and post-surveys provided respondents with a list of 13 items about their knowledge, comfort, skills, and self-awareness. On every single item, there was a positive shift in participant confidence from the pre-survey to the post. The largest gains were in the proportions of participants who felt highly confident in their grasp of the facts and statistics about suicide (+73%), and highly confident in their understanding of the extent of suicide prevention efforts in Vermont (+72%). In general, the areas in which participants reported lower gains were those where they reported higher levels of confidence on the pre-survey. On the post-survey, more than 90% of respondents indicated they were highly confident in 10 of the 13 areas. Future trainings should focus on helping participants achieve higher levels of confidence in the other three areas: having a clear picture of the extent of suicide prevention efforts in Vermont, being able to intervene if a participant is having a negative reaction to the discussion about suicide, and giving examples of how to respond to difficult comments.

On every single item gauging participant confidence, there was a positive shift from the pre-survey to the post.

Table 4. Changes in Confidence

	% High Confidence at Pre-Survey	% High Confidence at Post-Survey	Change
I have a good grasp of the facts and statistics about suicide	19%	92%	+73%
I have a clear picture of the extent of suicide prevention efforts in Vermont	13%	85%	+72%
I know the risk factors and warning signs for suicide	50%	100%	+50%
I understand the various roles people play within my organization and community in suicide prevention	50%	100%	+50%
I can intervene if a participant is having a negative reaction to the discussion about suicide	31%	77%	+46%
I know the steps to help someone who might be suicidal	56%	100%	+44%
I can give examples of how to respond to difficult comments	50%	83%	+33%
I can ask open questions to stimulate dialogue	69%	92%	+23%

I can explain the steps of a learning activity to participants in a clear manner	69%	92%	+23%
I am comfortable leading a discussion about sensitive issues	75%	92%	+17%
I can let others state their opinion without becoming defensive	75%	92%	+17%
I am aware of my own emotions while leading a group	94%	100%	+6%
I am clear about how suicide has affected me personally	88%	92%	+4%

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- Umatter® Gatekeeper
 - Participants exhibited meaningful knowledge gains regarding facts about suicide and the 3-Step Intervention Process.
 - From pre-survey to post-survey, trainees reported a substantial reduction in the number of barriers that discourage them from reaching out to students. This demonstrates that the training increases participants’ willingness to take action.
 - The training successfully prompted trainees to add suicide prevention resources to their phones.
 - Trainers should focus on helping participants overcome their “fear of saying the wrong thing,” as this was the only barrier selected by Gatekeeper trainees on the post-survey.
- Umatter® Training of Trainers
 - Participants expressed very high levels of satisfaction with the training and the vast majority stated the training was very or extremely useful.
 - The training successfully bolstered participants’ confidence in many areas related to facilitating Umatter® Suicide Prevention Awareness trainings.
 - Facilitators should focus on helping trainees increase their confidence in the following areas, in which participants reported having lower levels of confidence on the post-survey: having a clear picture of the extent of suicide prevention efforts in Vermont, being able to intervene if a participant is having a negative reaction to the discussion about suicide, and giving examples of how to respond to difficult comments.