



SUPPORTING STUDENT WELLNESS AND MENTAL HEALTH AT ILLINOIS COMMUNITY COLLEGES

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AGENDA



- Overview of the Mental Health Early Action on Campus Act
 - Pandemic related considerations
- Current State of MHEAC Work
- Best and Promising Practices at Illinois Community Colleges
- Questions

MENTAL HEALTH DURING THE PANDEMIC - STUDENTS

- Students have struggled with answering questions and identifying resources to access
 - Is counseling available?
 - How will I be impacted if I leave school, especially after the term starts?
 - Balancing care for family, children, and continuing in school
 - What level of enrollment can be maintained
 - How many classes?
 - What program makes sense now?
 - What if I need more help than before?

MENTAL HEALTH DURING THE PANDEMIC - STAFF

- Campuses had to make a shift to identify services that could be effective
 - Initial shift to remote, without much setup or knowledge for service delivery online and/or remote
 - Identifying how to prioritize which services were necessary and when/how they needed to be scaled up
 - How would the college fund services in the short-term and what were the long-term implications?
 - How will staff be able to interact with students in healing ways?
 - What new training would be needed?
 - How would staff need to interact differently than before?
 - How would staff interact with each other?

MHEAC ACT

- Mental Health Early Action on Campus Act (110 ILCS 58)
 - Passed in 2019
 - Funded beginning FY23
 - Intended to address gaps in mental health services on college campuses across Illinois, including both 2-year and 4-year institutions, through training, peer support, and community-campus partnerships.
 - Included areas of focus such as advisor, mental health conditions, telehealth, campus ratios for service, and technical assistance.

FUNDING FOR THE ACT

- FY23
 - Supplemental HB 969
 - Overall funding appropriation for FY23 \$6,659,999.00 for Illinois Community Colleges
 - Overall funding appropriation for FY23 \$2,240,000 for Illinois Public Universities
- FY24
 - \$9,218,800 for Illinois Community Colleges
 - \$3,382,900 for Illinois Public Universities
 - Includes 640,720 for Technical Assistance Center
- Allocations to individual colleges based on college survey submissions to COGFA (Commission on Government Forecasting and Accountability)

MHEAC ACT

Major Components

- Screening & Awareness
- Training Requirement
- Peer Support
- Local Partnerships
- Evaluation

SCREENING & AWARENESS

- Develop and implement an annual student orientation session aimed at raising awareness of mental health conditions.
- Assess courses and seminar available to students and implement, as available, mental health awareness curricula.
- Create and feature a page on website or mobile application with information solely about mental health resources available at the college.
- Distribute messages through LMS/online that encourage help seeking behaviors during high stress points during the semester (including mid-terms and finals).
- Implement screening tool to raise awareness and establish a referral resource for students.
- At least once per term and at times of high academic stress, including midterm or final exams, provide information regarding online screenings and resources.
- Provide contact information for the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline, Crisis Text Line, a local suicide prevention hotline, and the mental health center of the college.

TRAINING REQUIREMENT

- Each college designate panel of experts to develop policies and procedures related to mental health conditions and Section 504.
- Technical Assistance Center will set initial standards for policies and procedures.
- Resident Assistants, advisors, and campus security participate in Mental Health First Aid or similar training



PEER SUPPORT



- Develop and implement a peer support program using student peers to support individuals living with mental health conditions.
- Utilize best practices for peer support programs and provide continuous education.

LOCAL PARTNERSHIPS

- Form strategic partnerships with local mental health service providers to improve campus mental health wellness and capacity.
- Through a combination of on-campus capacity and off-campus linkage agreements, attempt to maintain a clinical staff member (non-student) to 1250 students.
- Work with local resources and non-providers, such as affiliates of the National Alliance on Mental Illness to meet awareness and training requirements.

EVALUATION

- Each college must evaluate the major components required under the act including:
 - Awareness and Training Programs
 - Peer Support Programs
 - Local Partnerships

STATEWIDE EFFORTS FROM COLLEGES

- Many identified struggles related to serving students during pandemic
 - Identifying enough providers to support services identified. In some cases, not enough or no internal mental health providers were available.
 - Concern over COVID related funding.
 - Spending on focused services
 - Understanding how the institution will shift when funds run out
 - Staff burnout
 - Expanded expectations of how and when services are provided
 - Struggle to meet the demand in an uncertain environments and resources
 - Space needs to provide appropriate in-person services
 - Telehealth options are very helpful. Many shifted to these services.
 - Some have varying results based on type and student use.

CURRENT MENTAL HEALTH EFFORTS

- MHEAC funding and other resources, including GEER funds, used to:
 - Add/expand virtual counseling
 - Expand counseling through additional campus counselors and community partnerships
 - Host mental health events
 - Wellness fairs
 - Self-care events
 - Develop peer support programs



BEST AND PROMISING PRACTICES

- Training
 - More than 20 colleges completed Mental Health 1st Aid or similar in FY22/23.
- Peer Support
 - Parkland College's Green Bandana Project
- Local Partnerships:
 - Highland College and New Horizon

MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORTS MOVING FORWARD



- Recorded Trauma Series and other Social Emotional Support Resources
 - <https://illearningrenewal.org/>
 - <https://ilequity.com/trauma>
- Listserv coming soon
- What is working for you?
- What other supports/resources would be helpful?

QUESTIONS



Thank you!

Contact Information

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