

Well AwareTM

A Suicide Prevention Program for School Administrators

■ School Board Members ■ Superintendents ■ Principals ■ Student Services Directors ■ Central Office Administration ■ Deans of Students ■ Health Center Supervisors ■ Consultants ■ Education Policymakers

RESEARCH SUMMARY

**For the Wyoming Dept. of Health
Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services Division**

**PRE-PROGRAM LAUNCH EVALUATION
FOR WELL AWARE WYOMING**

OCTOBER 14, 2008

Prepared by:



Casting Light on
Program Planning
& Evaluation
Mount Airy, MD

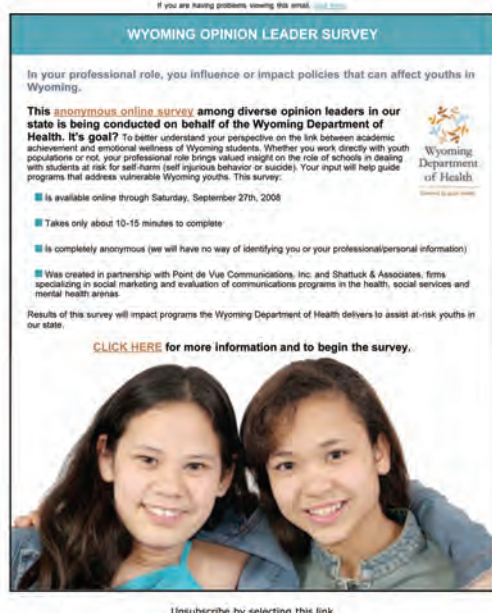


Executive Summary

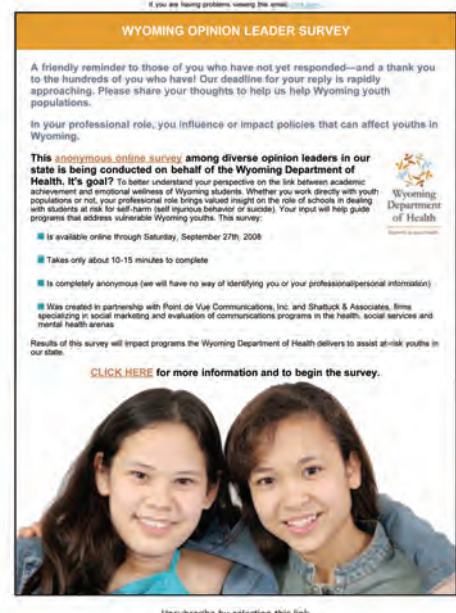
On September 3rd, 2008 the Wyoming Opinion Leader Survey was launched to better understand perceptions about the link between academic achievement and emotional health in Wyoming schools. This anonymous online survey preceded the Wyoming launch of Well Aware™, a suicide prevention program for school administrators, in part to provide baseline data and needs assessment for developing content for the Well Aware bulletin. It will be followed by a post-evaluation in 12-18 months to gauge gains in knowledge and shifts in attitude.

Conducted on behalf of the Wyoming Department of Health by Shattuck & Associates, with guidance and oversight from Point de Vue Communications, the survey was conducted to inform the development of communications messaging and programs to address the needs of at-risk youth, among these the Well Aware program. The 25-item online survey (see Appendix A) covered a range of domains including respondent characteristics, personal experiences working with high-risk youth, attitudes about the roles of schools in promoting student mental health, and knowledge of school regulations related to students' mental health.

Two-hundred sixty people responded to the survey before the September 27th deadline, representing a response rate of roughly 20 percent of the 1,456 people engaged (see Appendix B for email database). Potential respondents were incentivized to participate in the survey via graphics-rich email teasers (see below). The high response rate suggests that participants had an emotional reaction to this issue, that suicide prevention likely struck a chord with them and resonated emotionally.



FIRST EMAIL: Sent 9/3/08 to 1306 recipients



SECOND "REMINDER" EMAIL: SENT 9/18/08

Executive Summary *continued*

Noteworthy findings from this anonymous online survey of Wyoming Opinion Leaders are as follows:

1) More than HALF of respondents have worked with a young person who has attempted (or completed) suicide (#5). *NOTE: The survey hit the mark, reaching its intended audience.*

2) Schools are time-pressed: “No Child Left Behind” is sapping their ability to address emotional health issues (#7). *NOTE: Interventions, programs or training that takes little time and/or can be incorporated into existing curricula or staff development opportunities may be particularly appealing to time-pressed audiences.*

3) Respondents don’t fully realize that academic achievement is tied to emotional well-being (#8). *NOTE: This supports the mission of the Well Aware program as an educational/awareness outreach to school administrators, to make the link between academic achievement and student emotional well-being.*

4) About 15 percent of respondents don’t realize that youth suicide is a significant problem in WY (#13). *NOTE: Awareness programs are key and should include data/statistics to demonstrate the magnitude of the youth suicide problem in Wyoming.*

5) Awareness of suicide as public-health threat could be boosted, with a majority of respondents thinking (wrongly) that methamphetamine is a more common problem for young people in WY than suicide (#18). *NOTE: Awareness programs that go beyond the general population, and are aimed at stakeholders who work with at-risk youth, could be considered.*

6) An alarming 42 percent of respondents are not aware that schools are required to inform parents if they suspect a student is at risk for self-harm (#20). *NOTE: Communicating state-mandated requirements for school staff working with at-risk students is vital.*

7) About 1 in 6 respondents are not aware that sound suicide-prevention programs for schools may curb risky behaviors (#23). *NOTE: Highlighting the “halo effect” that sound school suicide-prevention programs can have in reducing risk behaviors may enhance relevance of these programs to school administrators.*

8) About 80 percent of respondents say schools are an appropriate place for screening (#9). About 75 percent say schools have the potential to intervene with students



continued ...

Executive Summary *continued*

at risk for self-harm (#11). And more than 9 out of 10 respondents say suicide prevention should be addressed in schools (#12). *NOTE: Overwhelming agreement that suicide prevention should be addressed in Wyoming Schools (#12) was perhaps most surprising among all survey responses. While there could be some social desirability bias here, 9 out of 10 respondents expressing agreement is “hitting the ball out of the park” in terms of awareness and acceptance of key issues posed in this question.*

9) Nearly 50 percent of respondents say screening for emotional well-being should NOT be MANDATED in schools (#10). *NOTE: Linking emotional screening to a school’s role in screening for hearing and vision, because they are key to learning, may be useful in approaching this issue with stakeholders. Also, this response reflects the time-pressed, stressed and overwhelmed feeling that many teachers and administrators have.*

10) Awareness of existing programs—or absence of these programs—is lacking, with less awareness of programs aimed at STAFF versus those aimed at STUDENTS (#15 and #16). *NOTE: Ongoing communication about best-practice and promising programs for both STAFF and STUDENTS can raise awareness.*

11) About a third of respondents are only a little comfortable or not comfortable at all with talking to the parents of an at-risk student (#25). *NOTE: Communicating with school staff about best ways to reach out to parents of at-risk students may be beneficial in building staff competency in this critical outreach. Implications for teacher training are suggested here.*



Well Aware

YES! I'd like to learn more about these **professional development opportunities** to enhance my district's work, **strengthen student wellness, and grow our school success.**

- KEEP IT COMING!** Keep sending me WELL AWARE™ IN WYOMING—a Bulletin for School Administrators and Professionals.
- PRO-SERVICE TRAINING!** Tell me to know more about incentive skills and gatekeeper training for suicide prevention for school staff.
- RESEARCH!** I need more information on the latest evidence-based, age-appropriate strategies for suicide prevention in schools.
- STUDENT PROGRAMS!** Tell me about all school assemblies or other student programs for enhance awareness of suicide prevention.
- PEER PROGRAMS!** Send me more information about peer-based suicide prevention education and the Natrona County Youth Engagement Council.
- FAMILY SUPPORT!** Tell me more information on parent education programs and support for families of at-risk students.

CONTACT US AT WELL AWARE WYOMING AT TALKBACK@WELLAWARESP.ORG

Please complete all information below.

First Name	Last Name	Job Title
Organization	E-Mail Address	
Address	Business Phone	
City	State/Province	Zip/Postal Code
Street Code		

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FIRST-CLASS MAIL PERMIT NO. 78000 SHEBOYGAN, WI
POSTAGE WILL BE PAID BY ADDRESSEE

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Point de Vue Communications, Inc.
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Sheboygan, WI 53082-9977

NO POSTAGE NECESSARY IF MAILED IN THE UNITED STATES

ADDITIONAL EVALUATION TOOL PENDING: Business Reply Card inserted in 5,166 copies of Issue 1, mailed on 10/9/08