



Youth Aware of Mental Health- Montana

What is YAM?

Youth Aware of Mental Health (YAM) is a classroom mental health promotion program that aims to raise mental health awareness about risk and protective factors associated with suicide, including knowledge about depression and anxiety, and to enhance the skills and emotional resiliency needed to deal with stress and crisis.

The course takes five hours and is typically delivered over the course of five sessions. The course is primarily offered to freshmen in high school, although it is also being researched in middle school students. The course is offered by a certified facilitator and trained assistant. The certified facilitators cannot work in the school that the course is being delivered in. Montana State University's (MSU) Center for Research and Recovery (CMHRR) conducting research on the efficacy of YAM through initial and post surveys with students, parents, and administration. The courses can be offered directly through CMHRR or through MSU Extension agents.

YAM is not a lecture series. Instead, it is an opportunity for students to delve into relative topics through active discussion and role-play. These create the opportunity to find solutions to difficult situations and common stressors. Every session is different, and trained facilitators guide the class through multiple topics driven by the students, as students are seen as equals and capable of solving complex problems. The end goal is for students to leave the program having gained an understanding of mental health and to have strategies to cope with difficult situations and stress in their own lives.

Evidence for YAM

The YAM program stands out among youth suicide prevention programs based on its strong research foundation of research evidence.¹ The Saving and Empowering Young Lives in Europe (SEYLE) study was a multicenter, cluster-randomized controlled trial that studied YAM and two other intervention. The SEYLE sample consisted of 11,110

¹ Brent, David A., and C. Hendricks Brown. "Effectiveness of school-based suicide prevention programmes." *The Lancet* 385.9977 (2015): 1489-1491.

Matt Kuntz J.D.
Center for Mental Health Research and Recovery
2155 Analysis Drive
Bozeman, MT 59717

adolescent pupils, median age 15 years (IQR 14-15), recruited from 168 schools in ten European Union countries.²

At the 12 month follow-up, YAM was associated with a significant reduction of incident suicide attempts (odds ratios [OR] 0.45, 95% CI 0.24-0.85; p=0.014) and severe suicidal ideation (0.50, 0.27-0.92; p=0.025), compared with the control group. 14 pupils (0.70%) reported incident suicide attempts at the 12 month follow-up in the YAM versus 34 (1.51%) in the control group, and 15 pupils (0.75%) reported incident severe suicidal ideation in the YAM group versus 31 (1.37%) in the control group. No participants completed suicide during the study period.³

YAM by the Numbers

Schools That Completed a YAM Course in 2016-2019		
Bozeman	Columbus	Park High
Broadus	East Middle School (Great Falls)	Power
Browning	Fairfield	Pretty Eagle (Saint Xavier)
Capital High (Helena)	Geraldine	Ronan
Chester	Miles City	Shephard
Chinook	Helena High School	Shelby
Choteau	North Middle School (Great Falls)	Shields Valley
Dutton	Florence	Turner
Noxon	Havre	Gardiner

Starting YAM in 2019-2020		
Whitehall	Butte High School	Rocky Boy
Lone Peak	Corvallis	Hamilton

For more information about this program, please contact Matt Kuntz, matthew.kuntz@montana.edu, or Kelley Edwards, kelly.edwards@montana.edu. The Center can also be reached by phone by calling (406) 994-1600.

Thank you,

² Wasserman, Danuta, et al. "School-based suicide prevention programmes: the SEYLE cluster-randomised, controlled trial." *The Lancet* 385.9977 (2015): 1536-1544.

³ *Id.*

Matt Kuntz J.D.
 Center for Mental Health Research and Recovery
 2155 Analysis Drive
 Bozeman, MT 59717

Matt Kuntz

Matt Kuntz, J.D.
Director

Matt Kuntz J.D.
Center for Mental Health Research and Recovery
2155 Analysis Drive
Bozeman, MT 59717

Matt Kuntz J.D.
Center for Mental Health Research and Recovery
2155 Analysis Drive
Bozeman, MT 59717