Improving Schoolwide Substance Abuse Outcomes at a Charter High School

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**Introduction/Background**

**EAST PALO ALTO ACADEMY HIGH SCHOOL (EPAA)**

- Public, charter school, grades 9-12
- 330 students
- Restorative justice approach
- School-based mental health team includes Stanford psychiatry fellows and PsyD students, supervised by Stanford psychiatrist and psychologist
- Student population: 80% Latino; 10% African-American; 8% Pacific Islander; 2% Asian, Filipino, White, and American Indian
- Approximately 35% of students are English Language Learners and 95% qualify for free/reduced lunch
- First-generation high school graduates: 65%
- First-generation college-bound: 87%

**EPAA Substance Abuse Prevention Program**

- Clinical rotation during 2016/2017 year laid groundwork and developed relationships
- Need for more comprehensive substance abuse prevention and treatment strategy was identified as a priority by school leaders

**Evidence Base**

- In the U.S., fewer than 10% of the 1.3 million youth who meet criteria for a SUD receive treatment1
- Schools provide an ideal setting for screening, brief interventions, and outpatient treatment of substance use disorders2
- Early interventions for adolescents using substances are generally effective in decreasing frequency and quantity of use as well as decreasing risky behaviors3
- Examples of programs with effective outcomes per SAMHSA NREPP: Building Assets, Reducing Risks, Hop Hop 2 Prevent Substance Abuse and HIV4

**Proposed Intervention**

**Community Engagement**

- Convening working group involving stakeholders including students, family members, teachers/staff and school-based clinic staff to examine and improve existing drug and alcohol policies and procedures at the school

**Primary Prevention**

- Use of evidence-supported substance abuse prevention curriculum (NOA), administered by school clinic staff and teachers

**Secondary Prevention**

- Improve screening and referral process for students at higher risk for SUDs

**Tertiary Prevention**

- Ongoing treatment at school clinic and referrals to community partners for those with SUDs, post-referral follow-up to ensure appropriate treatment and, when the referral process does not go as planned, to identify issues that may be limiting access to treatment

**Data Collection**

- IRB to be submitted in late 2017
- Will collect both quantitative and qualitative data, feedback from students and teachers to better tailor the curriculum and school substance use policies to meet the demands of the school’s unique population.

- Will examine both efficacy and effectiveness of these interventions

**Community Partners**

- East Palo Alto Academy

**Future Areas of Work**

- Expansion of prevention course with goal to teach to an entire EPAA grade level each year
- Refinement of course to meet needs of unique school population
- Continued work with school staff regarding knowledge base and approach to prevention of SUDs
- Further development of screening and referral process for school-based clinic
- Ongoing cultivation of relationships and network of community partners to refine follow-up procedures
- Potential for expansion of clinic and referral practices at EPAA to entire SMUHSD district

**Anticipated Barriers**

- Tension between adjusting curriculum to meet unique needs of student population and maintaining fidelity of NOA

**Funding**

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