Using Educational Gaming Technology to Prepare High School Teachers in Texas to Identify and Refer Students At-Risk for Suicide

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Agenda

- The need for gatekeeper training in TX high schools
- Overview of Plan
- At-Risk Training Simulation: Overview and Research
- At-Risk Texas High School Version
- Assessment Plan
- Roll-out Plan
- Questions & Answers
Gatekeeper Training for HS Teachers

**The Need:**
- Reduce stigma associated with mental illness
- Reduce the number of undetected students in schools
- Reduce the anxiety teachers experience about responding to at-risk students in their class
- Provide assistance to students as early as possible

**The Challenge:**
- Cost and administrative difficulty to schedule and provide face-to-face training to over 100,000 people in almost 1,500 schools
- How to integrate valuable practice opportunities into the training
- How to rapidly provide training to all teachers
- How to track participation and assess program effectiveness

**Solution: At-Risk Simulation**

A online, interactive and practice-based training simulation for university faculty

**Reasons for Adopting:**
- Web-based
- Reaching more faculty and staff
- Practice talking with virtual students
- SPRC Best Practices
- National Assessment Study
These slides are the property of Kognito.

Collaboration

The Plan:
Adapt Kognito’s At-Risk product to the needs of Texas High Schools

- Kognito working with MHA of Texas mental health experts
- Planned launch in August 2010
- Posted on the “Via Hope” website
- State-wide marketing campaign
- Assessment plan
- Hosting and technical support to end-users provided by Kognito
- Includes a user management system to track and record usage

Via Hope

- Created to provide a mental health consumer and family member driven system as part of the Texas Mental Health Transformation Project.
- A collaborative effort between:
  - The Texas Department of State Health Services
  - Mental Health America of Texas
  - NAMI Texas
- Peer specialist training and online training for mental health, addiction, recovery and workforce skills

Link: http://www.viahope.org
Virtual Practice Environments

Practice conversations with virtual, fully animated characters that possess memory and emotions. Receive personalized feedback on decisions.

Workplace Investigations

Performance Feedback

Suicide Prevention

At-Risk for University Faculty

1. Listed on SPRC/AFSP Best Practice Registry
2. 40 universities have adopted the product
3. Assessed in a national study at 72 universities + empirical study
4. Upcoming Versions of At-Risk:
   i. Peer-to-Peer for University Students (August 2010)
   ii. Families of Returning Veterans
   iii. Conversation with a Returning Veteran Student
Learning Objectives

Learning objectives derived from best practices allowing faculty and staff to:

1. Learn to recognize the common signs of psychological distress
2. Approach students with greater skill and confidence
3. Effectively refer students to the campus counseling center
4. Learn about their own college specific counseling center and referral process

Learning Experience

1. Assume the role of a faculty member who is concerned about five of his students, three of whom are at-risk and need to be referred.
2. Analyze profiles of the five virtual students.
3. Engage in simulated conversations with the ones you suspect are at-risk and, if necessary, refer them to the campus counseling center.
4. Training is complete once you successfully identify and refer the three at-risk students.
Step 1. The Classroom

Users assume the role of a faculty member named Professor Hampton, who is concerned about five of his students, three of which are at-risk for mental distress and need to be referred.

Step 2. Examine Student Profiles

Users can click on any student for more information, such as (1) his academics (grades, participation, attendance)...
Step 2. Examine Student Profiles

(2) any troubling behaviors Prof. Hampton has noticed

Step 2. Examine Student Profiles

(3) and his physical appearance. They can then decide whether they want to “Talk to Student”
Step 3. Simulated Conversation

User controls the conversation by choosing what topic(s) to discuss and what specific things to say or ask. Each conversation takes 5-7 minutes to complete.

Users receive encouragement and constructive criticism on their decisions from a coach and the virtual student’s responses and body language.
Step 3. Simulated Conversation

It's not appropriate or helpful for you to attempt to diagnose Alberto's condition. If you think he has a problem that could be mitigated through counseling, you should refer him to the Counseling Center. There he can meet with a trained therapist for a formal diagnosis.

Critical errors by the user leads to immediate corrective feedback as well as the opportunity to undo and correct their behavior.

Summary Feedback

Alberto was very sarcastic and aggressive at the beginning of the conversation. However, he eventually opened up to you and may have admitted that he had thoughts of suicide.

Here are some useful strategies:

1) When in doubt, talk to the student.
It's easy to let students like Alberto slip by, since they're not being disruptive in class. However, by speaking with him, you found out he's actually been having serious issues.

Keep in mind that it's never a bad idea to ask a student how he's doing, especially when he's missed assignments and been doing poorly in class. You never know when there could be something more serious going on, and most students will appreciate that you took the time to speak with them.

Upon concluding each conversation, users receive narrated and animated feedback, which includes an analysis of the student and a review of their symptoms in class and in conversation.
72 universities, 1,200 participants, May – December 2009:

91% said they had at least one student in their class who concerned them

Changes in Knowledge and Skill

89% reported they are better prepared to identify, approach and refer students in mental distress

83% reported they are more confident in their ability to help a suicidal student.
Effectiveness of Instructional Approach

97% reported the simulated conversations were realistic representations of conversations they had with at-risk students.

96% would recommend At-Risk to their colleagues.

Download Complete Report at:
www.kognito.com/atrisk/research.html

Assessment Plan

Assessment of Program:

1. Longitudinal Survey Study: online questionnaire after training plus 6-month follow up survey
2. Usage: number of users, district, position
3. Empirical Study: using control group and situational judgment tasks (still in planning stages and seeking partners)
Role-Out Plan

Role-Out Program:

1. Target audiences: general, public high school teachers, principals, counselors & student support staff, school systems
2. Promote through web sites, list serves, emails, e-newsletters, conference workshops and exhibits, Texas Suicide Prevention Council
3. Press conference, media release
4. Webinar for educational groups
5. Products: electronic poster, flyer, exhibit
6. Local Suicide Prevention Coalitions work with school districts to include training as part of inservice

Questions & Answers

Link to Demo of At-Risk for University Faculty:
www.kognito.com/atrisk

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