



# CRITICALLY EVALUATING SCHOOL MENTAL HEALTH (CESMH) ONLINE REPOSITORY

## BACKGROUND

### Why

At present, there are no known national programs or services in Canada that partner mental health or education researchers with school professionals/schools/school boards for the explicit purpose of critically evaluating school based mental health promotion/prevention programs for safety, effectiveness and cost

### What

CESMH\* is an online repository that provides synthesis of evidence of school mental health promotion/prevention programs for educators across Canada to assist them in selecting the programs for their schools.

### Who

CESMH is led by teenmentalhealth.org where the repository will be housed. Participants in the development of the repository include mental health, education, and research experts across Canada.

## EVALUATION PROCESS & TOOLS

The CESMH team will conduct systematic reviews that critically appraise the quality of evidence on all available research studies for school mental health programs as requested by schools, using the Office of Justice Program (OJP) What Works Repository. The OJP What Works Repository classifies programs into 6 levels of evidence of effectiveness and 3 levels of readiness for dissemination, using rigorous scientific criteria.

## CESMH PILOT PROJECT

The CESMH team conducted a systematic review that critically appraised all research studies on two school based suicide prevention programs that are widely disseminated and heavily marketed to schools in North America: the Signs of Suicide (SOS) Prevention Program and the Yellow Ribbon Suicide Prevention Program, for their effectiveness, cost-effectiveness and safety.



## FINDINGS

- 1 There is a lack of evidence on the effectiveness of the SOS and the Yellow Ribbon suicide prevention programs for decreasing suicide rates
- 2 There are no studies available to investigate the cost-effectiveness or safety of the SOS or Yellow Ribbon suicide prevention programs

**YR** Yellow Ribbon suicide prevention programs  
**SOS** the Signs of Suicide (SOS) Prevention Program

## KEY POINTS TO SHARE

- 1 The SOS and Yellow Ribbon suicide prevention programs are not recommended to decrease suicide rates in schools
- 2 Schools have to make informed decisions about what interventions they chose for their students, and the programs should be supported by strong research findings, not those that may appear useful and beneficial
- 3 Awareness/understanding of suicide and mental health may not necessarily mean a decrease in suicide rates

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1 Although it is not evidence that suicide prevention programs have an impact on suicide rates, the message is not to stop educating students about suicide prevention, but to apply best evidence-based strategies in schools

## USEFUL INFORMATION

- A full report of this pilot project can be found at: [www.teenmentalhealth.org](http://www.teenmentalhealth.org)
- Information about the OJP What Works Repository can be found at: [www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/220889.pdf](http://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/220889.pdf)



- 4 Proxy measures, such as suicide ideation and suicide thoughts, are often applied to measure program effectiveness, which do not necessarily decrease suicide rates
- 5 Objective standards should be set to assess available suicide prevention programs and other school mental health programs before their implementation

- 2 Youth suicide is a complex phenomenon and needs a comprehensive approach that involves various domains and different types of preventions. Such an approach needs to link the school with families, the wider community, and the health system.