Students’ Perspectives on Education and Screening for Depression & Suicide

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BACKGROUND
Youth suicide has increased more than 50% in the past ten years, a 76% increase for youth ages 15-17 (Curtin & Heron, 2019). School-based postvention programs are an important youth suicide prevention approach. Suicide postvention guidelines (Berkowitz et al., 2011) have not been extensively researched (Andriessen et al., 2018; Robinson et al., 2013). This study explored the perspectives of students who had received postvention services (Signs of Suicide education program and depression/suicide screening).

METHODS
Students answered the following open ended questions on a depression screening tool:
1. How was your experience of filling out the screening tool?
2. How can schools better help support students?
3. How do you take care of yourself?

Thematic analysis was used to group the responses into categories. Frequencies were used to determine percentages of responses in each category. Responses which were illegible or incomprehensible were excluded from the analyses.

HIGHLIGHTS
• Most youth don’t find screening stressful or harmful
• Youth believe schools should use and build on personal connections (e.g. teachers reaching out to students)
• Youth suggest schools facilitate create supplemental support services and facilitate access to current supports
• Youth most commonly described utilizing these strategies for self-care: friends/social supports, exercise, sleep, and hobbies and doing things they enjoy.

IMPLICATIONS
• The lack of distress reported encourages schools to conduct more screenings
• Teachers & staff should actively reach out to at-risk youth, using existing relationships.
• Schools could support the use of more sophisticated self-care strategies.

REFERENCES