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I would like to welcome readers from across the commonwealth of Pennsylvania to the inaugural issue of the **SHIELD Newsletter**. This biannual publication will provide study updates regarding the **Screening in High Schools to Identify, Evaluate and Lower Depression (SHIELD) project**, timely information about adolescent depression research, and best mental health practices. As SHIELD's principal investigator, I hope that the newsletter is informative whether you are a school representative, parent, student or community member. Regardless of your role, I'm confident that we all share a mission to improve resources and foster environments to support adolescent physical and mental wellness. Please share these resources with friends and colleagues as we work together to bring healthy choices to life.

**STUDY BACKGROUND**

Project SHIELD is supported through two national funding agencies; the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) and the Patient-Centered Outcomes Research Institute (PCORI). HRSA's mission is to improve health outcomes and reduce health disparities. Also focused on improving health outcomes, PCORI uniquely prioritizes the involvement of patients and community stakeholders in their funded programs.

Mental health needs that are not appropriately addressed can negatively affect many aspects of life. Identifying adolescents with depression in a timely manner is important to their wellbeing.

For this reason, project SHIELD is working with 16 Pennsylvania high schools and community stakeholders, through HRSA and PCORI support, to investigate the effectiveness of a universal mood screener administered in a school setting.

It is common practice for primary care doctors to screen and conduct mental health discussions with adolescent patients. Unfortunately, less than 40 percent of adolescents visit a doctor's office regularly. Schools provide an opportune location to reach adolescents who may go unscreened at a primary care setting. With mental health needs rising among adolescents, project SHIELD explores the use of the school setting to conduct mood screenings among adolescents to improve the identification of depression.

The study has three key phases:

- **Phase One:** Gather stories and feedback from school staff, parents and students about the study, their perceptions of mental health resources, and barriers to receiving help.
- **Phase Two:** Conduct mood screeners with participating high schools.
- **Phase Three:** Engage communities from participating schools to help advance mental health awareness and reduce stigma.

At the time of publication, phase one concluded and phase two was in process. Stay tuned for additional study updates.

## SUCCESS STORY



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## MENTAL HEALTH RESEARCH FINDINGS



By Dennis Thompson  
*HealthDay Reporter*

Photo by Tim Foster on Unsplash



## Raising the Stakeholder Voice in Research

Project SHIELD places high importance on understanding the views and needs of those most affected by the study results. To ensure those voices were heard, phase one of the project successfully included guided group discussions with parents and students, as well as interviews with school staff members.

Discussions with parents and students focused on the resources needed to create a supportive mental health environment within the school setting. School staff shared their experiences with managing student mental health, as well as challenges and considerations for implementing the research project in their respective schools.

Several key findings emerged from guided group discussions:

- **Parents** emphasized the importance of clear and consistent communication from school staff. Many parents were unaware of resources to support their student's mental health such as the Student Assistance Program (SAP).
- **School staff** highlighted the value of teachers recognizing their student's mental health needs, as they can play a key role in helping students.
- **Students** were unlikely to disclose mental health concerns to a doctor, especially if they had little to no contact with the doctor previously. Students also had strong opinions about how and where a mood screener should take place within their schools to ensure their confidentiality.

The feedback that was gathered through guided group discussions was critical to ensure that the design of the study's next phase meets the needs of students, their families and the school.

## How Are You Feeling? Check Your Wristband

*(HealthDay News)* – Remember the "mood ring" craze of the 1970s?

A high-tech wristband is being developed along the same lines, potentially helping patients who struggle with mood disorders.

The smart wristband would use a person's skin to track their emotional intensity. During a mood swing, either high or low, the wristband would change color, heat up, squeeze or vibrate to inform the wearer he might be in the throes of depression or anxiety, the researchers said.

"As the feedback is provided in real time, our devices encourage people to become more aware of their emotions, name them, potentially reflect on what causes them, and even learn how to control their emotional responses in order to change the visual or tactile feedback provided by the device," said researcher Corina Sas. She is a professor of human-computer interaction and digital health at Lancaster University in the United Kingdom.



**LINK TO FULL STORY:**

<http://bit.ly/HowAreYouFeelingStory>





"Ms. Pileggi, here's a screenshot of something Mark posted on social media tonight. I'm worried he's thinking about suicide and I don't know what to do. Can you help?"



## STAKEHOLDER RECOMMENDATION

Written by Francesca Pileggi,  
Executive Director of Aavidum

As a school counselor, I've unfortunately woken up to find this type of email in my inbox more than once. With our youth being heavy social media users, it is highly likely that most students will encounter this situation at some point in their lives. In fact, when we were developing our free Aavidum Mental Health & Suicide Prevention Curriculum with students and educators, we included a "What would you do?" scenario about this exact issue. It is crucial for students to know what to do and what resources are available in the event that they encounter a worrisome social media post.

Many people are unaware that most social media platforms have safety teams, who are ready and able to respond to these types of posts. For example, Facebook now provides tools for both supporting and reporting. To support, Facebook offers a series of pre-drafted messages that users can customize to directly initiate a conversation with the original poster, message a mutual friend to work together to help the original poster, or message or call someone at the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline to get advice about helping the original poster. Additionally, users can report the post to Facebook, and the safety team will review the post and anonymously reach out to the original poster with resources.

Snapchat, Instagram, Twitter and YouTube all allow users to report the content to their safety teams, who will anonymously contact the original poster with resources. Many social media platforms have developed these resources in collaboration with the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline.

Visit <http://bit.ly/SocialMediaSafetySupport> to view thorough instructions for each social media platform.

If a friend's social media post or text message is concerning, please speak up or reach out to them. Your support and reporting could save a life. Remember, if you see something, say something; anyone can prevent suicide.



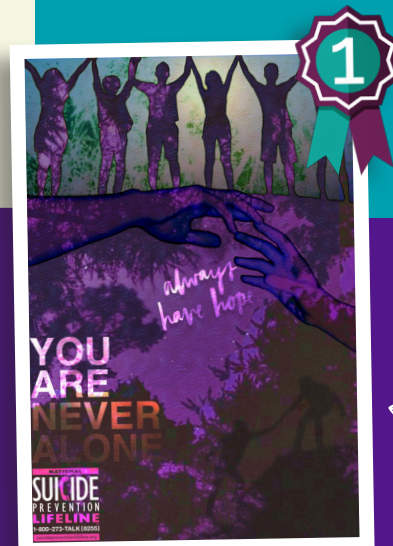
PREVENT SUICIDE PA

### 2020 Annual PSA Contest for Youth Suicide Prevention

Don't forget to vote from  
Jan. 20 – 31, 2020!

<http://bit.ly/2020PSAPosterContest>

Winners will be announced Feb. 7.



2019 WINNER  
Curtis McEvoy,  
Brentwood  
High School



***\*It is critical to note that if someone may be in crisis or is at immediate risk of suicide, using these measures is not appropriate. In those cases, it is important to contact 911 or a local crisis service for immediate help.\****

## EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES



# How to Keep Children Safe Online

## FOR PARENTS:

- ✓ Establish online rules and an agreement with your children about Internet use at home and outside of the home.
- ✓ Spend time online alongside your children and establish an atmosphere of trust regarding computer usage and online activities.
- ✓ Place the home computer in an area of the house where you can easily supervise your family's Internet activity.
- ✓ Regularly discuss online friends and activities with your children. This may help you learn about the digital generation's use of the Internet – and it may help keep your family safe.
- ✓ Block instant/personal messages from people that you or your children don't know.
- ✓ Review the amount of time that your children spend online, also be familiar with what times of the day they are socializing online.

Source: <http://bit.ly/NetLiteracy>

## FOR TEENS:

- ✓ If one of your real world friends “lives” on the Internet – be a friend and invite that person to do something together that’s in “the real world.”
- ✓ If your sibling or friends seems to be making bad choices online that could compromise their safety, talk with them, and a parent or trusted adult.
- ✓ Your parents should respect you, but remember that they have the ultimate responsibility to keep you safe.
- ✓ Block instant/personal messages from people that you don't know.

Source: <http://bit.ly/NetLiteracy>



## EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES

By Sarah Clark  
Mott Poll



# Children's Health Poll Results Are In

The SHIELD study team has partnered with the C.S. Mott Children's Hospital National Poll on Children's Health to understand parent perspectives on recognizing depression in youth. The Mott Poll produces monthly reports on a variety of child health topics, based on responses to online surveys of parents throughout the country. The November 2019 Mott Poll Report, Recognizing Youth Depression at Home and School, is based on responses from 819 parents with at least one child in middle, junior high or high school. Key findings are:

- One in four parents say their preteen/teen knows a peer or classmate with depression
- Nearly all parents rate themselves as very or somewhat confident that they could recognize signs of depression in their own child; yet two-thirds of parents acknowledge barriers to recognizing those signs
- Seven in ten parents think schools should screen all students for depression, with most recommending that screenings begin in middle school

➡ Visit [www.mottpoll.org](http://www.mottpoll.org) to view the full Mott Poll Report.