

Mental and Emotional Education Team

Peer Educators for Mental Health Equity

Background

- 20% of youth ages 13-18 live with a mental health disorder.
- 50% of lifetime mental health issues begin by age 14.*
- At Berkeley High School, there is no formalized mental health education, and most students will receive at most a few lessons about stress management from a teacher with no background in mental health.
- The Mental and Emotional Education Team (MEET), modeled off the successful Sexual Health Information From Teens (SHIFT) program, would train a cohort of students from BHS and Berkeley Technology Academy (BTA) to teach lessons about common mental health disorders and ways to get help, and participants would serve as leaders in reducing stigma and breaking down barriers to service access.

*National Institute of Mental Health

Climate of Silence and Isolation



- Of 242 BHS students surveyed, 60% reported having experienced mental or emotional health struggles at some point during high school.
- 58% of those who self-identified mental health needs said they had not accessed care.
- 75% of African American males with mental health needs did not access care.

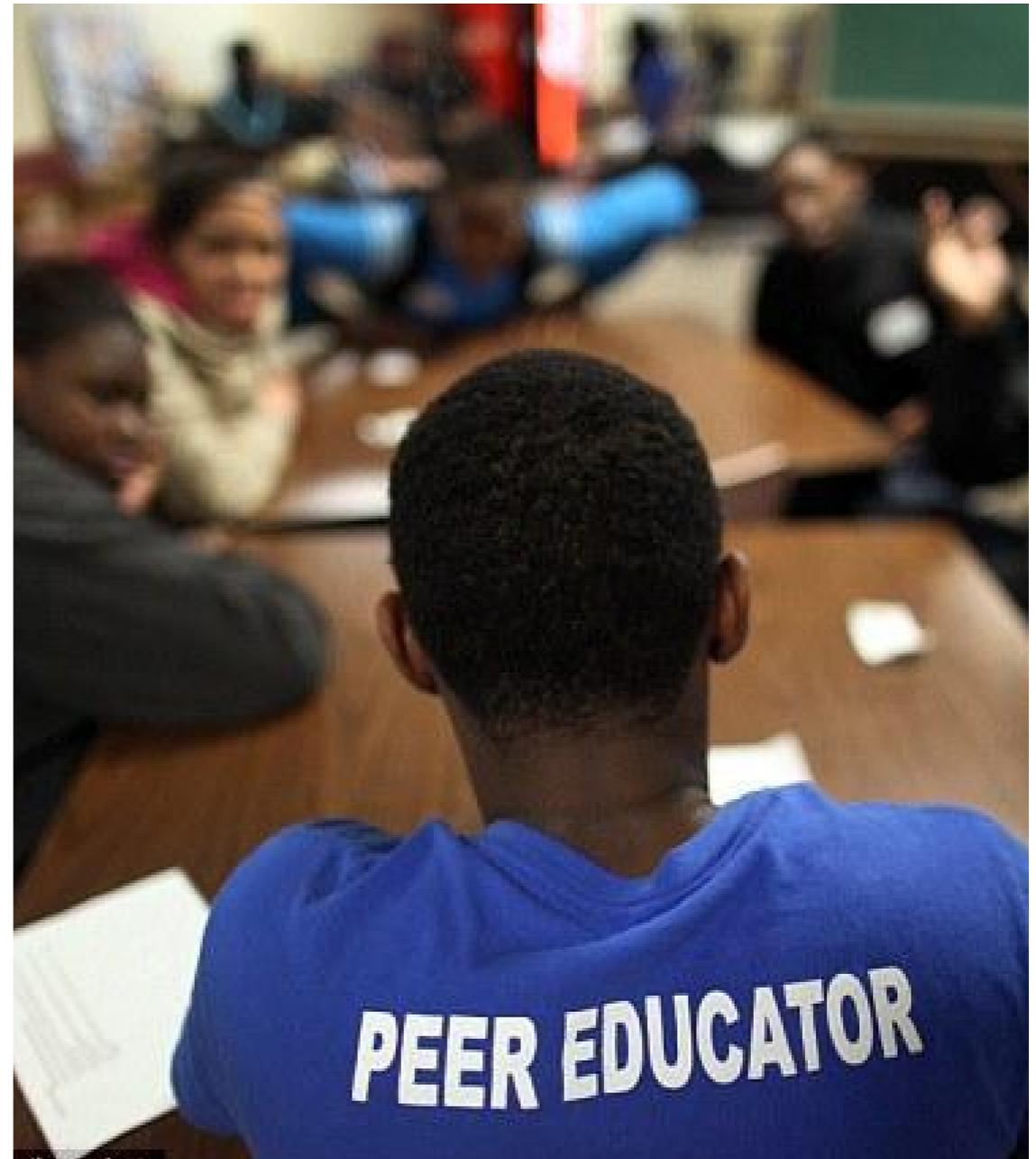
Impact of Current Situation

- A survey of 148 students found that 52% missed one or more days of school due to mental health issues.
- 32% self-medicated for stress, depression, anxiety, or another mental health disorder with marijuana, unprescribed adderall, alcohol, and other substances.
- For students who already face educational barriers, struggles with mental health can contribute to the achievement gap.



Peers as a Resource

- Trainings such as Mental Health First Aid for Youth teach adults essential skills about how to identify students in crisis and connect them to services.
- Berkeley offers no such opportunities for other youth, who are often the first people a peer would choose to come to.
- 51% of students surveyed said that a friend or other student would be their preferred resource if they were experiencing mental health difficulties.



MEET Proposal

- *Objective* - Train a cohort of peer educators to execute two-day presentations focused on freshmen Social Living classes. Presentations include an overview of mental health disorders and symptoms, coping skills, what to do if someone is in crisis, how to reduce stigma, and how to connect with existing resources.
- *Staff* - A licensed clinician or trained AmeriCorps or graduate student intern would prepare curriculum, interview and teach peer educators, and provide support during presentations.
- *Stipend* - Educators would receive a stipend equivalent to SHIFT students.
- *Schedule* - Educators would participate in bi-weekly two hour trainings for the first semester, and bi-weekly one hour trainings for the second semester, when they will focus on presentations.
- *Expectations* - MEET would be a graded class with required attendance and assessments to ensure educators are knowledgeable and accountable.
- *Cost* - Total is estimated at \$92,778. A City of Berkeley .5 FTE Health Center employee costs \$77,778 with benefits; supplies, Information Technology, and other materials could cost up to \$5,000, and stipends for participants total about \$10,000. Additional funding would be contingent on a review of the pilot.
- *Evaluation* - A program assessment, possibly another staff and student survey, will be incorporated into the responsibilities of the trainer and educators.

Timeline

- *November 2016* - Youth Commission established a Mental Health Subcommittee and to begin work on the proposal.
- *February 2017* - Administered 250-student mental health survey. Also surveyed all Social Living teachers and received unanimous positive feedback for a mental health peer educator program.
- *April 2017* - Youth Commission approved MEET proposal and requested joint funding from City Council and Board of Education.
- *June 2017* - Council referred the proposal to the 2x2 Committee and agreed to consider funding in the mid-year budget. Commissioners presented to Board of Education.

Questions & Feedback