



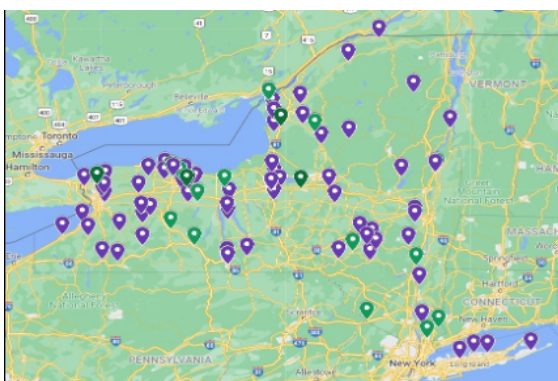
Funding History and Program Background:

In 2015/2016 budget year, the NYS Senate Mental Health Committee secured multiple funding streams in the NYS Budget totaling \$2.25 million for the University of Rochester to deliver its evidence-based suicide and substance use prevention programs titled "Source of Strength" and "Above the Influence" Since 2015, contracts for this funding has been administered through the Office of Mental Health (OMH).

Sources of Strength is a comprehensive wellness program that focuses on suicide prevention and it looks to impact other issues students deal with such as bullying, substance abuse, and violence. This evidence-based program trains students as peer leaders and connects them with mentoring adult advisors at school and in the community where they are then in turn able to help their fellow students with school-wide healthy coping and connections that reduce vulnerability to suicidal behavior.

In addition, thanks to this initial funding, middle schools across the state have been able to take part in the "Above the Influence" substance abuse prevention program, also implemented by Dr. Wyman's team at the University of Rochester. This program engages eighth graders to encourage their peers to overcome pressures to abuse drugs and alcohol. Peer leaders go through training to learn what motivates them to rise above negative influences.

The below map highlights the school districts that have participated in and/or adopted these programs.



Work to Date:

Over the past 5 years, with support from the NYS Office of Mental Health, Dr. Peter Wyman and his team have focused on bringing the Sources of Strength and Above the Influence programs to schools across NYS where mental health resources are lacking and youth suicide rates are highest. To date:

- 63 schools have implemented this program since 2016 (in 24 NYS counties),
- 3,948 youth Peer Leaders have been trained,
- 924 Adult Mentors have been trained,
- Cumulatively, over 120,000 students impacted by evidence-based prevention activities,
- Created 4 training hubs: (Rochester, Buffalo, Watertown, Albany/Capital) and NYC in development.

Additionally, Dr. Wyman's team has begun looking specifically at working with predominately Black Churches in NYS to help reduce the rise of Black youth suicide, this program is called Family-Connect. The Family-Connect. S program has shown to reduce depression and suicide risk in emerging adults. To date they have worked with:

- Church Mental Health Coalition (Rochester) with 12 churches in Rochester beginning training.
- Church in Harlem (First Corinthian) implementing and others starting in 2022.

How can NYS Help?

With the original support for these programs set to be depleted in 2023, we ask:

- **Ask:** The Office of Mental Health (OMH) and Governor Hochul to include an extension of funding support for this work by providing another \$5 million over 5 years in the FY 2023-24 NYS budget.
- **Ask:** The NYS Legislature to support any proposal the Governor may make for these program and ensure that \$5 million over 5 years is included in their one-house budget proposals.