



CLIENTS	Caregivers, Whole Families, Youth (Middle, Highschool & Transition)
NUMBER	2044 unduplicated youth/families
ETHNICITY	African, Asian, African American, Immigrant, Latino, White, Native American
INCOME	Unknown
DIAGNOSES	Anxiety, Bipolar Disorder, Conduct Disorder, Depression, Eating Disorder, FAS, ODD, PTSD, Substance Abuse Disorder, Schizophrenia/Psychosis, Suicidality

FEELING SAFE

Crisis team member: "I keep a lockbox in my car. It's nice to leave something with the family to help them feel safe."

Crisis team member: "Showing parents how to use the lockbox really helps start a conversation about removing medications, sharp objects, shavers, and other things that can be dangerous."

Educating Families & School Staff on Mental Illnesses & Suicide Prevention

- Distributed 44 lockboxes
- Distributed 2,000 Mental Health Crisis Planning booklets to 46 Ramsey County middle schools and high schools
 - 1,000 English versions
 - 1,000 Spanish versions



MATEO

PROBLEM/CHALLENGE

Mateo's grandmother didn't know what to do. She caught him trying to strangle himself with an extension cord.

INTERVENTION

A cultural liaison at Mateo's school connected his mom with the Ramsey County Children's Crisis Response Team. A Crisis Worker brought a lockbox when she visited Mateo's home. The Crisis Worker walked through Mateo's home with his mother and together they identified items that needed to be locked up—such as extension cords and knives. The Crisis Worker also shared the Spanish version of NAMI's mental health booklet on crisis and hospitalization.

IMPACT/SUCCESS

Right away, Mateo's grandmother decided that she would wear the key to the lockbox around her neck. She felt greatly relieved that she could do something that could help her grandson be safer. That night, she read through the NAMI booklets. Even though Mateo's grandmother spoke some English, it was much easier for her to understand in Spanish.

Mateo's grandmother learned what to do in an emergency and what to expect if hospitalization is necessary. She started keeping a journal and crisis kit. She also practiced strategies like the LEAP method. Today she is less overwhelmed and feels like she knows how to manage a crisis.



Ramsey County Children's Mental Health Collaborative (RCCMHC) Funded Services

FUNDED AGENCY: NAMI Minnesota (National Alliance on Mental Illness) is a non-profit organization dedicated to improving the lives of children and adults with mental illnesses and their families. For over 40 years, NAMI Minnesota has worked to promote the development of community mental health programs and services, change public attitudes about mental illnesses, improve access to services and increase opportunities for recovery.

FUNDED PROGRAM/SERVICE: Educating Families and School Staff on Mental Illnesses and Suicide Prevention

STATEMENT OF NEED: Families with a child who is experiencing a mental health crisis often do not know the signs of an impending crisis or the resources available to support them and their child, resulting in undue distress and even out-of-home placements due to mental health issues. For Spanish-speaking families, these barriers are intensified by the fact that Latino families are increasingly afraid to call 911 in the event of a crisis that is escalating into the potential for self-harm or harm to others. Moreover, crisis teams do not necessarily have lockboxes on hand when addressing youth who are experiencing suicidal thoughts or behaviors. Such valuable resources are typically in high demand.

COLLABORATING AGENCIES: Ramsey County mobile crisis team and 46 middle schools, high schools, and alternative learning centers

PROGRAM/SERVICE DESCRIPTION: RCCMHC funds supported NAMI Minnesota to help families plan for and manage a crisis thus improving their ability to support their child's mental health and prevent hospitalization or out-of-home placements. By reaching out to the Spanish speaking community and helping them know what to do in a crisis we will begin to address health equity. By providing lock boxes we decrease the risk of suicide. Lockboxes are very useful when crisis teams are addressing suicidal thoughts of adolescents and children. The boxes have key locks (every young person knows what numbers will be used in a number lock) and are used to lock away both over the counter and prescription medications along with knives. Information about the crisis teams are placed on the outside of the box. Crisis teams appreciate the lockboxes because families can put them to use immediately to keep their child safe. NAMI Minnesota's crisis booklet provides families with critical information on how to prevent and manage a mental health crisis for their child and resources that are available. English- and Spanish-language booklets were distributed to Ramsey County middle schools and high schools, for school personnel to pass on to family members who might need them and to use themselves when working with youth experiencing a mental health crisis.

LENGTH OF GRANT TERM: Aug. 15-Nov. 30, 2018

AWARD: \$3,830.00

DATA COLLECTION: Our services under this grant are primarily preventative and enable those directly serving families to provide critical information that families need (booklets) and resources that can save lives (lockboxes), as needed. Crisis numbers are included with both booklets and lockboxes. We check back with the crisis team and schools to learn how our materials were used.

UNDERSERVED POPULATION: First, we specifically aimed to meet the needs of Latino families by distributing 1,000 Mental Health Crisis Planning Spanish-language booklets (Planificación para crisis de salud mental en niños) through 46 Ramsey County middle schools, high schools, and alternative learning centers. Second, we selected schools in diverse neighborhoods that have high proportions of Latino, African American, immigrant, and other multicultural community members. A prime example is the Dayton's Bluff neighborhood of St. Paul, where 65% of residents are from multicultural communities. Communities include 32% Asian or Pacific Islander, 15% African American, and 12% Latino (<https://www.mncompass.org/profiles/neighborhoods/st-paul/daytons-bluff>).

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PROPOSAL GOALS AND OBJECTIVES THAT WE MET: We distributed lockboxes to Ramsey County's mobile crisis team for use with families with children who are experiencing suicidal thoughts or behaviors. With costs lower than anticipated for printing the booklets, we obtained 10 more lockboxes than originally proposed for a total of 44. As proposed, we distributed 2,000 Mental Health Crisis Planning booklets (1,000 English and 1,000 Spanish) to 46 Ramsey County middle and high schools. Our original proposal stated that the crisis booklets would be distributed to all Ramsey County schools. We focused on middle and high schools, rather than elementary schools, since adolescents are at greater risk for a mental health crisis, and we wanted to make sure the schools had at least 15-20 each of the English and Spanish booklets.

IMPACT AND OUTCOMES Through classes on Mental Health Crisis Planning, which provide the same information as the booklets, and through previous experience with lockboxes, we know that the information and resources provided will have a positive impact on children living with a mental illness and their families. When lockboxes are used, they can reduce the likelihood that a child in crisis will be able to access items around the home that can be used to harm themselves or others. The booklets not only provide clear guidance on what causes a mental health crisis, warning signs, and de-escalation strategies but also how to create a crisis plan. Crises can develop even when all the best preventative strategies have been used, so having a crisis plan in place, which can include use of a lockbox, is critical. Participants in a NAMI class on crisis planning, which introduces parents to the information in the booklet and focuses on developing a crisis plan, have commented that the following information was particularly helpful: Having a crisis plan in place, Having phone numbers available and know the resources that offer specialized help, Knowing how a person in crisis behaves, how to approach the situation and who to call, Knowing when to contact the crisis team, What happens after calling emergency services, Triggers for children living with a mental illness and de-escalation techniques. In other words, parents learn what they didn't know they needed to know and where to turn in a crisis. Without a guide, like the booklet, parents often learn what to do through trial and error. With the information provided by NAMI, they can move right to proven strategies and techniques.

IMPACT AND OUTCOMES- how they relate to RCCMHC vision and goals

RCCMHC Vision: Ramsey County youth will have the strengths, skills, relationships, supports, and opportunities that they need to experience mental health and wellbeing. Mental illnesses can create unique stressors that require new skills for adolescents and their families, especially skills that can help de-escalate a brewing mental health crisis and deal effectively with a crisis if it occurs. Parents and other caregivers don't know what they don't know until they are in the midst of a crisis. This causes undue trauma for the child experiencing a mental health crisis and their entire family. The booklets can help prevent at least some of this trauma by providing parents with knowledge and resources that may prevent a full-blown crisis or support that family with proven means to deal with a crisis. School staff and the county mobile crisis team can help families support a child by providing the mental health crisis planning booklet and/or a lockbox. Applying the knowledge families learn from the booklet and using the resources help children with challenging behaviors or a diagnosed mental illness function at the highest possible level of their own mental health.

Goal A: A Responsive Children's Mental Health Delivery System. If families don't know how to identify and plan for a mental health crisis for a child, they will not be able to connect effectively with the systems that are available. The booklets help fill this need through education and information on resources. In addition, providing lockboxes to the mobile crisis team makes it possible for the team to be more responsive in cases where a child is having suicidal thoughts or behaviors.

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Goal B: Health Equity. NAMI Minnesota developed and distributed 1,000 Mental Health Crisis Planning Spanish-language booklets (Planificación para crisis de salud mental en niños) to improve knowledge of and access to resources for Latino families. As mentioned previously, we selected schools in diverse neighborhoods that have high proportions of Latino families and also African American, immigrant, and other multicultural community members. School staff will have opportunities to connect parents with critical information that helps them navigate systems designed for families in crisis. As stated in the booklet, "a mental health crisis is just as important to address as any other health care crisis."

Goal C: Youth and Whole Family Wellbeing. NAMI Minnesota's project focused on helping families plan for and manage a mental health crisis for their child. This supports the child's mental health and the wellbeing of the entire family, including through prevention of out-of-home placements for reasons related to mental health. Everyone in the family is impacted when a child has a mental health crisis. Learning what to do through trial and error can lead to unnecessary trauma for the child and the rest of the family. Learning what to do, where to go, who to call, and having a plan in place provides a sense of control and empowerment in an otherwise unpredictable and out-of-control situation. Lockboxes also provide a sense of wellbeing for the entire family when a child is at risk for self-harm or doing harm to others.

LESSONS LEARNED: RCCMHC learns from the successes and challenges of our grantees. Lessons learned from today's funded programs will inform tomorrow's evidence-based, practice-informed and community-defined services and supports.

Why our program did (or, did not) achieve the desired results: Both school staff and the mobile crisis team are able to reach families with a child in crisis – or as a crisis is escalating. NAMI Minnesota has forged an ongoing working relationship with the Ramsey County mobile crisis team. Having our new office located in the same building as the team has only strengthened the relationship. This certainly facilitated distribution of the lockboxes, which the team is sharing with families whose child has suicidal thoughts or behaviors. For distribution of the booklets, school staff are uniquely positioned to observe their students' behaviors and connect with parents and other caregivers when there are concerns that a crisis may be emerging. School staff can reach families with information and resources (i.e., the booklets) when families may be uncertain where to turn or may not even realize that a mental health crisis is building. Parents may then have greater confidence that they can prevent or better manage future crisis situations.

RCCMHC should continue to support/fund this aspect of the program/service (and why): Providing information to parents on identifying, preventing, and managing a mental health crisis for their child who lives with a mental illness is critical. Supporting education (booklets, classes) and lockboxes will help us continue to reach families.

We could try this differently next time: NAMI Minnesota has received RCCMHC grants for short-term projects that focus on distribution of resources. NAMI has certainly been willing to provide education, information, and resources on short turnarounds, and we appreciate the funding. However, greater impact is possible with more intensive, longer-term projects, such as development of a mental health curriculum that is appropriate for middle school students. This would also serve youth directly and not only through their parents. Support for Ending the Silence classes in Ramsey County high schools is another means to serve youth directly. For parents, NAMI Minnesota will soon have a 15-minute online training available in English and Spanish on navigating a child's mental health crisis. Promoting this training in Ramsey County would help reach more parents.