

BHWell

Center for Behavioral Health & Well-Being Research

Dr. Jodi J. Frey

What is the goal of the Interactive Screening Program in Suicide Prevention?

The Interactive Screening Program (ISP) was created by the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP). Originally, it was created to provide an option for anonymous screening, anonymous dialogue/counseling with a trained mental health professional on an encrypted platform, and referral to treatment, when needed, for college students. Research supported its effectiveness in outreaching successfully to students at risk for suicide, especially those who might not otherwise reach out to traditional counseling services. After seeing this success, workplaces expressed interest in adapting the program to support employees. AFSP answered the workplace call and revised the program to work as an embedded program at work in collaboration with employee assistance programs (EAPs) and peer counseling programs.

How do you see your research making an impact in suicide prevention?

My research is the first study to examine utilization of ISP in workplaces and to start assessing outcomes related to help-seeking among employees. (Continued in next page)



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The overall sample includes data from 21 workplaces from industries including healthcare, law enforcement, public service and technology with over 8,000 employee users. Results from initial studies conducted by my team have shown the ISP is successful at engaging employees who screen at highest risk for suicide and other mental health challenges and that the program can be easily integrated into existing workplace mental health programs. Workplace leaders who were interviewed about their use of ISP in healthcare settings observed that the number of suicide attempts and deaths decreased - in many instances to zero - after successfully integration and promotion of ISP in their workplace.

How does this research affect social work practice?

The need to include education, prevention, intervention, recovery, and resilience into workplaces to prevent suicide, while also supporting positive mental health and well-being is critical. Suicide rates continue to increase with working-aged adults and the workplace is still a relatively untapped environment for social work. Additionally, the use of motivational interviewing techniques, which are examined in this research, and their influence on help-seeking behaviors are important skills that social workers use in various counseling situations. Results from our research suggest that different MI techniques (i.e. asking questions, showing empathy) have different impacts on help-seeking outcomes for employees in diverse workplace industries. Exploring new ways to outreach and engage individuals at high risk are important for social workers to know about as they increase the tools and programs they use in their practice and more comprehensive suicide prevention programs.

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