

# Equity in Mental Health Framework Toolkit

– from –  
THE STEVE FUND **AND** THE JED FOUNDATION



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# EQUITY IN MENTAL HEALTH FRAMEWORK OVERVIEW

The Equity in Mental Health Framework (EMHF) found [here](#) provides a model to guide colleges and universities in developing, implementing, and refining on-campus programs to support the emotional well-being and mental health of students of color.

The Framework, and corresponding online toolkit, provide recommendations and implementation strategies to support administrators, decision-makers, providers, and students in their campus based efforts to reduce mental illness stigma, increase support and proactive responsiveness, improve campus climate, and provide system-wide opportunities to help all students to thrive.

The EMHF toolkit was primarily designed to support college/university administrators and providers; but can be of use to students, families and communities.

The EMHF recommendations are designed to be employed at any stage of on-campus programming development and implementation. The recommendations are designed to address challenges faced by campuses, provide insight on program implementation, and share best-practices for collaborations within and across campus programs. Additional support for these activities can be provided by [JED](#) and [The Steve Fund](#).

# OVERVIEW OF MODULES

## *General Background on Partnership and Framework Development*

### **I. Why was the partnership formed between the Steve Fund and The Jed Foundation (JED)?**

- A. There is a general rise in the demand for mental health and wellness-oriented resources to support diverse student populations on college/university campuses
- B. However, there is a gap in knowledge around best practices in the development of empirical programs that are designed to address the specific needs and speak to the experiences of students of color

### **II. How did the partnership prepare?**

- A. In order to inform a set of recommended practices that can be adopted and implemented by colleges/universities, the partnership first completed a comprehensive review of:
  - 1. The current mental health and education literature examining supports and resources related to the mental health of students of color on campus
    - a) This led to a compilation of examples of current programs and initiatives (evidence-based) in place across college campuses
  - 2. Review of the literature on current mental health challenges facing students of color; reported mental health needs; perceived barriers to available care
- B. Data analyzed for program development included:
  - 1. National Harris Poll of 1,500 first-year college students examining their high school to college transitions and the associated mental health and emotional challenges of that transition
  - 2. Harris Poll Survey of 1,056 racially diverse college students examining views on mental health issues and available campus supports

### **III. What are the goals of The Steve Fund and JED partnership?**

- A. Survey colleges and universities on their current practices in supporting the mental health of diverse students
- B. conduct a national survey of college students in order to benefit from their recommendations and
- C. convene over 100 college and university leaders to provide additional input and perspective

## RECOMMENDATION #1: *Implementation Strategies*

1: *"Identify and promote the mental health and well-being of students of color as a campus-wide priority."*

It is important for institutions of higher learning to center the well-being of their students, including students of color, within the mission of the institution.

- I. In order to do this, institutions should consider the following key implementation strategies:
  - D. Centralize mental health within a definition of overall student well-being. This would support practical steps toward integrating emotional well-being into the institutional creed and standard order of operations
  - E. College and university mission, vision statements and goals should reflect an active commitment to student mental health and well-being with special attention to the needs of a racially diverse student body
  - F. Tie mental health and well-being to student success via strategic planning of fiscal and personnel resources

## RECOMMENDATION #2: *Needs Assessment*

2: *"Engage students to provide guidance and feedback on matters of student mental health and emotional well-being."*

To help address mental health and emotional well-being needs among college and university students of color, it is important to first understand the current state of mental health supports and resources available for students of color. This data can be gathered from a variety of sources and should include the perspectives of student, faculty/staff, administrators, and professionals.

### I. **Healthy Minds Study**

- G. The Healthy Minds Study (HMS) is an annual web-based survey study examining mental health, service utilization, and related issues among undergraduate and graduate students. It includes a diversity and inclusion module. Since its national launch in 2007, HMS has been fielded at over 180 colleges and universities, with over 200,000 survey respondents. (<http://www.healthymindsnetwork.org/>)

### II. **Qualitative data collection**

- A. Gather feedback directly from students, faculty, and administrators:
  - 1. What needs and concerns do they have concerning the mental health and emotional well-being of students of color?
  - 2. What resources do they feel are necessary for their campus and are not currently available?

- a) If programs have already been implemented, assess feedback on how to improve implementation or address any issues
- 3. What suggestions do they have for improving campus climate around mental health for students of color?
- B. Gather demographic information:**
  - 1. Schools may track trends in demographics of the student body so that they are aware of groups of students that are growing or declining
- C. Means of data collection can include:**
  - 1. Focus groups and surveys with students of color that assess needs and challenges regarding mental health, emotional well-being, sense of belonging on campus, and academic success
  - 2. Can also assess the opinions (in similar ways) with faculty, staff, and administrators
- D. It is important to assess campus climate systematically and regularly**
  - 1. For example, assess the group in fall vs. spring to see if needs/concerns of students, staff/faculty, and administrators have been addressed as a result of new program implementation or after changes have been made to existing programs

## **RECOMMENDATIONS #3-8: Program Implementation**

3: *"Actively recruit, train, and retain a diverse and culturally competent faculty and professional staff."*

4: *"Create opportunities to engage around national and international issues/events."*

5: *"Create dedicated roles to support well-being and success of students of color."*

6: *"Support and promote accessible, safe communication with campus administration and an effective response system."*

7: *"Offer a range of supportive programs and services in varied formats."*

8: *"Help students learn about programs and services by advertising and promoting through multiple channels."*

The partnership sought out campus-based programs nationwide to determine best practices, implementation recommendations, as well as potential barriers to the implementation of campus programs, evaluation of program effects, and dissemination of program outcomes. The findings and recommendations of this search have been summarized into general takeaways below.

### **I. Suggestions for program development:**

- E.** When possible, promote engagement (by students, faculty, staff, community) in programs that support the mental health and emotional well-being of students of color
- F.** Create supportive spaces for the open discussion of current issues and events on campus

- G. Create programs that provide education, engagement, and leadership opportunities
- H. Evaluate current clubs and activities offered to students to check for representation of areas of interests and cultural competence
- I. Programs must be accessible and promote safe communication practices/policies for students

**II. Consider including the following in program implementation:**

- A. Programs should provide the opportunity for students to engage in dialogue and provide feedback
- B. Programs should try to address different intersecting aspects of identity where possible (for example, students of color who also identify as LGBTQ+)
- C. Programs should also 'appear' representative; i.e. people of color represented in staff/faculty/implementers
- D. Appropriate advertising of program should be seriously considered to ensure that as many students are made aware of available program services

**III. Recruiting and retaining faculty and staff of color**

- A. Focus on what faculty themselves say about these issues to provide insight into lived experience
  1. Providing the perspective of educators moves this recommendation beyond theory and into practice
- B. Available resources:
  1. *Best Practices: Recruiting & Retaining Faculty and Staff of Color* by Western Washington University
    - a) [https://www.wwu.edu/eoo/docs/Best%20Practices\\_Recruiting%20and%20Retaining%20Staff%20of%20Color.pdf](https://www.wwu.edu/eoo/docs/Best%20Practices_Recruiting%20and%20Retaining%20Staff%20of%20Color.pdf)
  2. *Retention of Underrepresented Minority Faculty: Strategic Initiatives for Institutional Value Proposition Based on Perspectives from a Range of Academic Institutions* (Whittaker et al., 2015)
    - a) <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4521729/>
  3. *Report of the Initiative for Faculty Race and Diversity* by Massachusetts Institute of Technology
    - a) <http://web.mit.edu/provost/raceinitiative/research-b.html>
  4. *Diversity 3.0 Learning Series* by the Association of American Medical Colleges
    - a) <https://www.aamc.org/initiatives/diversity/learningseries/>
  5. Ball State University's Diversity Resources and Links provides series of links on experiences of students of color

6. National Association of Diversity Officers in Higher Education (NADOHE) provides ongoing updates on national issues that affect diversity, equity, and inclusion in higher education
  - a) <http://www.nadohe.org/>

## **RECOMMENDATION #9: Program Evaluation**

9: *"Identify and utilize culturally relevant and promising programs and practices, and collect data on effectiveness."*

### **I. Quantitative Data Collection (Healthy Minds Study)**

- A. The Healthy Minds Study (HMS) is an annual web-based survey study examining mental health, service utilization, and related issues among undergraduate and graduate students. Since its national launch in 2007, HMS has been fielded at over 180 colleges and universities, with over 200,000 survey respondents. (<http://www.healthymindsnetwork.org/>)

### **II. Qualitative data collection**

- A. In order to assess the success of Framework recommendations, while also assessing the general opinion of students of color concerning mental health needs and concerns on campus, it is important to continuously gather feedback on program implementation and design

### **III. Means of data collection/variables to assess can include:**

- A. Focus groups and surveys with students of color that assess needs and challenges regarding mental health, emotional well-being, sense of belonging on campus, and academic success
  1. Can also assess the opinions (in similar ways) with faculty, staff, and administrators
- B. Pre-post assessments on student satisfaction with program, academic performance, mental health outcomes
- C. Assess effectiveness/efficacy of program (number of students served, mental health variables, levels of minority related stress)
- D. Assess demand and utilization over time
- E. Use this feedback as a measure of evaluating program success, challenges, or needs for improvement

## RECOMMENDATION #10: Program Dissemination

10: "Participate in resource and information sharing (within and between schools)."

- I. Google form to collect relevant information on your school can be found [here](#)
- II. Focus on both scientific and professional dissemination of study findings and program information and materials
- III. Dissemination helps to facilitate campus knowledge of existing programs and access to those programs
- IV. Suggested dissemination methods:
  - A. Partner with student leader and campus student organizations to host student-outreach events
  - B. Support faculty and staff attending professional conferences and workshops to encourage professional development and communication
  - C. Collaborate with personnel at other schools to share lessons learned, best practices, and suggestions for program implementation

# SUGGESTED REFERENCES AND RESOURCES FOR IMPLEMENTATION

Included here are resources you may want to use to implement this framework. Within this portion of the toolkit, you will see resources you can use on your own. The Steve Fund and The Jed Foundation can also be helpful to you in implementing by serving as your partners throughout the process.

## Needs Assessment

Recommendation #2: Engage students to provide guidance and feedback on matters of student mental health and emotional well-being

*Campuses should regularly and systematically conduct surveys and focus groups with students of color to understand their needs and challenges regarding their mental health and emotional well-being, sense of belonging on campus, and academic success. Some examples of organizations that can help with this task include the Healthy Minds Study (as mentioned previously) and found [here](#) and the Center for Collegiate Mental Health found [here](#).*

Some of the benefits of participating in the Healthy Minds Study include:

- Strengthening grant applications (e.g., SAMHSA Garrett Lee Smith grants)
- Advocating for mental health services and programs on campus
- Evaluating existing programs (e.g., reductions in stigma following a major campaign)
- Assessing need for programs and services
- Raising awareness of mental health and campus resources
- Making thoughtful comparisons with peer institutions<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> <http://healthymindsnetwork.org/participate/benefits>

The fees related to participating in Healthy Minds are based on institution size and type. See their [website](#) for more information. Also see Center for Collegiate Mental Health website [here](#).

### **Program Implementation**

**Selected Readings** : please refer to Appendix A

**Informed trainings:** <http://www.mentalhealthamerica.net/back-school>

**Best Practices** (Please see Case Studies from [EMHF long document](#)):

- Brief workshop or workshop series
- Mentor networks
- Transition programs
- Ongoing student engagement

### **Program Evaluation**

Program evaluation for the EMHF requires a comprehensive assessment of the student, administrator, staff and family perspectives. The focus should support learnings related to perceived individual mental health, campus mental health, campus climate, interpersonal interactions of different groups (students with faculty, faculty with staff, students with administrators, etc) and should serve as a snapshot of the mental health of the overall campus and of students of color in particular. Both quantitative (institution based campus climate surveys; HMS survey) and qualitative data (focus groups; open ended online questions for students, faculty and staff) should be collected regularly and annual summary reports prepared. The summary reports would ideally be formatted and shared across multiple school platforms and in various forms (e.g. dedicated website, email blast snapshots, strategically posted flyers, town hall meetings, etc.).

The findings from the evaluation of campus programs must be reported back to the campus community to support their faith and trust in the process. Finally, it is imperative that campuses integrate lessons learned into the school's strategic plan as this supports capacity building and buy-in from the campus community.

Strategic planning document example: [UMass Amherst](#)

# APPENDIX A:

## *Selected Readings on Key Topics*

**Race-related stress, and acculturative stress:** Critical readings that define, examine and analyze the impact of stress related to one's status as a person of color, and the experience of adapting to a new culture.

Cokley, K., McClain, S., Enciso, A., & Martinez, M. (2013). An Examination of the Impact of Minority Status Stress and Impostor Feelings on the Mental Health of Diverse Ethnic Minority College Students. *Journal of Multicultural Counseling and Development*, 41(2), 82–95.

Coleman, M. N., Chapman, S., & Wang, D. C. (2012). An Examination of Color-Blind Racism and Race-Related Stress Among African American Undergraduate Students. *Journal of Black Psychology*.

Crockett, L. J., Iturbide, M. I., Torres Stone, R. A., McGinley, M., Raffaelli, M., & Carlo, G. (2007a). Acculturative stress, social support, and coping: Relations to psychological adjustment among Mexican American college students. *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology*, 13(4), 347–355.

**Culture and mental health stigma and help-seeking:** Articulation and analysis of the role of one's culture in perceptions around mental health and reaching out for support.

Abdullah, T., & Brown, T. L. (2011). Mental illness stigma and ethnocultural beliefs, values, and norms: An integrative review. *Clinical Psychology Review*, 31(6), 934–948.

Cheng, H. L., Kwan, K. L. K., & Sevig, T. (2013). Racial and ethnic minority college students' stigma associated with seeking psychological help: Examining psychocultural correlates. *Journal of counseling psychology*, 60(1), 98.

Breland-Noble, A. M., Al-Mateen, C. S., & Singh, N. N. (Eds.). (2016). *Handbook of mental health in African American youth*. Springer.

**Stereotype threat, test-taking, and academic self-efficacy:** How negative stereotypes can disrupt academic performance and widen the achievement gap.

Appel, M., & Kronberger, N. (2012). Stereotypes and the Achievement Gap: Stereotype Threat Prior to Test Taking. *Educational Psychology Review*, 24(4), 609–635.

**Stigma and 'student' identity:** Discussion of racial stigma and perceived socioeconomic class and how it can impact students' sense of identity.

Chang, M. J., Eagan, M. K., Lin, M. H., & Hurtado, S. (2011). Considering the impact of racial stigmas and science identity: Persistence among biomedical and behavioral science aspirants. *The Journal of higher education*, 82(5), 564.

Browman, A. S., & Destin, M. (2014). Cueing the student in me: Perceived socioeconomic fit influences implicit identification with achievement and academic motivation among low-socioeconomic status college students.

**Campus climate:** Current attitudes, behaviors and expectations around how the entire campus community (faculty, staff, students etc.) approach matters related to diversity and inclusion.

Cholewa, B., Goodman, R. D., West-Olatunji, C., & Amatea, E. (2014). A Qualitative Examination of the Impact of Culturally Responsive Educational Practices on the Psychological Well-Being of Students of Color. *The Urban Review*, 46(4), 574–596. <http://doi.org/10.1007/s11256-014-0272-y>

**Diversity representation and counterspaces:** The importance of diverse representations of self for students of color, and safe spaces for discourse and self-expression.

Grier-Reed, T. L. (2010). The African American student network: Creating sanctuaries and counterspaces for coping with racial microaggressions in higher education settings. *The Journal of Humanistic Counseling*, 49(2), 181.

Cerezo, A., & Bergfeld, J. (2013). Meaningful LGBTQ Inclusion in Schools: The Importance of Diversity Representation and Counterspaces. *Journal of LGBT Issues in Counseling*, 7(4), 355–371.

**Impostorism:** Explorations in how one's negative self-perception of their accomplishments can impact mental health and wellbeing.

Cokley, K., Awad, G., Smith, L., Jackson, S., Awosogba, O., Hurst, A., et al. (2015). The Roles of Gender Stigma Consciousness, Impostor Phenomenon and Academic Self-Concept in the Academic Outcomes of Women and Men. *Sex Roles*, 73(9-10), 414–426.

**Adverse effects of racism, discrimination, and ethnicity-related stress:** The emotional health and well-being implications of racism and ethnic minority related stress for students of color in higher education.

- Blume, A. W., Lovato, L. V., Thyken, B. N., & Denny, N. (2012). The relationship of microaggressions with alcohol use and anxiety among ethnic minority college students in a historically White institution. *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology, 18*(1), 45–54.
- Cokley, K., Hall-Clark, B., & Hicks, D. (2011). Ethnic Minority-Majority Status and Mental Health: The Mediating Role of Perceived Discrimination. *Journal of Mental Health Counseling, 33*(3), 243–263. <http://doi.org/10.17744/mehc.33.3.u1n011t020783086>
- Chao, R. C. L., Mallinckrodt, B., & Wei, M. (2012). Co-occurring presenting problems in African American college clients reporting racial discrimination distress. *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice, 43*(3), 199.

**Culturally related values:** Discussion of the correlation between identity and value systems with one's cultural background.

- Berkel, C., Knight, G. P., Zeiders, K. H., Tein, J. Y., Roosa, M. W., Gonzales, N. A., & Saenz, D. (2010). Discrimination and Adjustment for Mexican American Adolescents: A Prospective Examination of the Benefits of Culturally Related Values. *Journal of Research on Adolescence, 20*(4), 893–915.

**Ethnic identity: centrality and affirmation:**

- Brittian, A. S., Umana-Taylor, A. J., Lee, R. M., Zamboanga, B. L., Kim, S. Y., Weisskirch, R. S., ... & Brown, E. J. (2013). The moderating role of centrality on associations between ethnic identity affirmation and ethnic minority college students' mental health. *Journal of American College Health, 61*(3), 133-140.

## Books

- Breland-Noble, Alfree M., Cheryl S. Al-Mateen, and Nirbhay N. Singh, eds. *Handbook of mental health in African American youth*. Springer, 2016.
- Watt, Sherry K., and Marybeth Gasman. *Designing transformative multicultural initiatives: Theoretical foundations, practical applications, and facilitator considerations*. Stylus Publishing, 2015.
- Brown, Dorothy A. *Critical Race Theory: Cases, Materials, and Problems*. 3d St. Paul, MN: West Academic, 2014. Print.
- Palmer, Robert T., et al. *Black Male Collegians: Increasing Access, Retention, and Persistence in Higher Education: ASHE Higher Education Report 40: 3*. John Wiley & Sons, 2014.



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A Joint Project of



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