

Colorado Springs Pediatric Suicide Prevention Environmental Scan

QUAD INNOVATION PARTNERSHIP
FALL 2020

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Introduction

With the intention to support El Paso County in their efforts to mitigate youth suicide, the Quad recognizes that COVID-19 has a nuanced, yet significant impact on how we manage, assess, and treat people in need. In these sensitive times, the Quad has been working to develop an online tool. We believe this tool will encourage the remarkable endurance that this county has continued to exhibit. It will also attempt to offer a resource that responds to the shared challenges that stakeholders have expressed facing, in an attempt to lower El Paso county's alarming youth suicide rate.

El Paso County has the highest rate of suicide completions anywhere in the state, with Colorado being the sixth worst in the United States, nearly double the national average. This group was tasked with, not only researching modes of pediatric suicide prevention, but also critically assessing an individual's path of care. Based on our work this semester, we have come to believe that simply providing more care facilities is not the most productive step forward. Seemingly, there is an abundance of resources; however, there exists a detrimental lack of communication amongst organizations, institutions, and programs. Upon this recognition, we felt the need to address this communication barrier. Due to the time constraints of this semester, we have only been able to complete so much. While our project is still in the developmental stage, we urge those who engage with the continuation of our work, to see the potential that this website has beyond this fall semester.

Evolution of Project

Our team initially planned to compile a map of mental-health-related organizations in El Paso County that included their expertise and purpose. This map would allow community stakeholders and the greater public to identify areas of the county where mental health organizations or initiatives are located and where they are needed. Early on, we also realized that there might have been a lack of communication during referral processes and keeping track of at-risk pediatric individuals. Improved communication and teamwork between acute care facilities, long-term care programs, schools, parents and guardians, and other support services should improve the care of at-risk youth. Our team compiled a list of mental health organizations around the county and began conducting interviews to better understand what these organizations,

schools, and institutions did and how we could adapt our project to best serve the greater community.

This work showed us that El Paso County has a vast number of organizations and resources that are focused on this issue; however, there is no connection or network between most of these organizations. Then came our eureka moment. There are few resources to help people find the best fitted aid for them that considers location, type of care, or one's interest in prevention training. In fact, googling "mental health helping agencies", or something similar, may be extremely overwhelming and confusing because of the sheer quantity of organizations in El Paso County. Someone in crisis and considering suicide would be even more overwhelmed and would not have the facilities to wade through these resources.

Our website is designed to be user friendly, minimize confusion, and direct people to helpful organizations that best suit their needs, based on their situation and location. The website also serves as a database with contact information and expertise for the vast majority of helping organizations in the county. This can help organizations improve their communication and teamwork.

Deliverables

The core elements of our work with the Quad this semester have been conducting interviews to better understand the stakeholders in youth suicide prevention in Colorado Springs, as well as discerning the format in which our work would be the most useful and accessible for community members. Ultimately, our team decided on a webpage that would serve as a centralized hub for the myriad of resources that are available to our community regarding youth suicide prevention.

Intended users include the following:

- Youth in crisis
- Youth in need of long-term care
- Parents/Guardians
- Concerned friends/family members
- People interested in prevention training
- School officials

Website features:

- A questionnaire is used to determine which resources best serve the user's situation.
- An interactive map shows where each resource is located, including a pop-up feature that provides details about the resource when the user hovers over it. Resource details include a contact phone number/email, along with what to expect when contacting the resource.
- A separate page where the full map and its resources are shown gives the user the ability to filter through it manually. The filters are: Acute Care Facilities/Crisis Centers, Behavioral Health Facilities, Child & Family Services, Grief Counseling, Support Groups, Therapists, Youth Development Programs, Faith Community, Military, LGBTQ+, Special Needs, Prevention Training, and Schools.
- An immediate pop-up for parents informs them of the importance of releasing their child's medical information to their school. Without this release, the school has no way of knowing their child was in crisis and cannot help them follow the safety plan set by the hospital. The child's safety is at an elevated risk for the two weeks following a suicide attempt, so it is important for their school to have the ability to support the child.
- A portal allows resource officials to log in and update their information.
- A dynamic, mobile-friendly design is intuitive and easy to use on all devices.

In the following you will find the questionnaire, answers, and corresponding resources:**Youth:**

- *Yes, I need help right now.*
 - This answer is intended to direct youth in crisis to immediate care and treatment. They should be shown acute care resources such as hospitals and suicide hotlines.
- *No, but I have in the past.*
 - This person may be struggling or has struggled with depression and/or self-harm. Appropriately, they should be shown long-term care resources such as behavioral health centers, therapists, and child & family services.
- *I'm worried about a friend/peer.*

- Someone concerned about someone else should be shown school contacts, as well as long-term and acute care resources.
- *I've lost someone I know to suicide.*
 - This answer is should lead those grieving to grief-counseling and support groups.
- *I'm interested in prevention training.*
 - This person is looking for suicide-prevention training programs and other programs that teach them how to support those around them.
- *I want to build a community.*
 - In efforts to help youth build and nurture a sense of community, this should show the person community centers, youth development programs, and places of worship.

Parents/Guardians:

- *Yes, I need help now.*
 - This parent's child is in a crisis and should be cared for immediately. They should be shown acute care resources, hospitals, and suicide hotlines. Additionally, the parent should be notified of the importance of releasing medical information to their child's schools and other organizations to help facilitate their child's recovery.
- *No, I'm looking for long-term care.*
 - This parent's child is not in immediate crisis, but they may be struggling with depression and/or self-harm. They should be shown long-term care resources such as behavioral health centers, therapists, and child/family services.

Others:

- *I've lost someone to suicide.*
 - This answer should lead those grieving to grief-counseling and support groups.
- *I'm interested in prevention training.*
 - This person is looking for suicide prevention training programs and other programs that teach them how to support the youth in their lives.
- *I want to build a community.*

- In efforts to build, restore, and further nurture a sense of community, this should show community centers and/or places of worship, among other community focused organizations.
- *I'm interested in what programs are being conducted.*
 - This person may be interested in what school and district suicide-prevention measures look like. They should be shown schools, school districts, and their current suicide prevention programs.

Additional Considerations

This section will explore a few ideas that spawned from our conversations with community leaders and plans we had outside of mapping available resources. Among these ideas, the notion of connecting community members engaged in fighting youth suicide with appropriate training, was made clear to us through a relevant feature on the website. Anyone who is interested in helping the community can easily find the training that is most applicable to their interests.

One of the barriers that we discovered when dealing with youth suicide was parental awareness and the HIPPA laws that prevent the dissemination of care plans designed for children. Counselors, teachers, and others in the community are often involved in a child's life, nearly as much as a parent. Allowing trusted adults to have access to the care plan, developed by an inpatient facility, after release is critical. The weeks following a pediatric individual's release from a care facility are often a high-risk period where an incident is more likely to occur again. To help prevent this, our goal was to give parents access to important education and help alleviate the stigma around seeking or continuing treatment.

Without some form of marketing campaign, this project would be spread via word of mouth. Additionally, we have prototyped a business card with a QR Code that links to the website. We grabbed this idea from one of our community leaders. It is easy to make and distribute to anyone who is interested in promoting this project; it can be given to parents, counselors, children, or anybody that has a need for navigating mental-health services.

Search engine optimization is another means by which we can help promote the website. Having the right tags and keywords in a google search that redirects to our resource would be helpful. If someone google searches "I'm feeling suicidal" or something along the lines of

“please help me,” our resources should be easily located to help that individual access the care they need. We tried to get an idea of what resources are currently available so that we did not replicate any already existing work. The goal was to make navigating the available resources easier for the entire community.

Next Steps

In our construction of this resource, members of our team used the Adobe XD platform to intentionally prototype a design of the website's layout. Their work serves as a foundation for a professional webpage developer to bring the page to life on a user-friendly desktop and mobile format. A vital component of the webpage is the interactive map. This map highlights the various community organizations and partners who support youth in this community, provides acute care and other health resources, and assists the family members of young people who may be struggling with thoughts of suicide or who have died by suicide. Colorado Springs and the surrounding areas have many different programs and resources. We are aware that our initial scan was insufficient in capturing all that this region has to offer.

When considering this project's future, we want to express the significance of continual community outreach to include new partners on the interactive map. We also promote the establishment of a centralized team that can update the information every quarter or biannually. We recognize that this webpage, especially if presented as a resource for young people in crisis, must have the most accurate and up-to-date information. Considering that the staff at some organizations may change over the years, we encourage that the contact information provided on this website is rooted in the organization, rather than attached to a single member.

Along similar lines, future research into internet keyword searches, as well as a digital media campaign to promote this webpage, would be essential for the development and accessibility of this resource. Our team has already created a business card with a QR code as one way to promote our work, but we must take additional steps to advertise. We have repeatedly heard from stakeholders that spreading the word and making the community aware of this resource will be one of the most significant challenges of this project. Furthermore, we must consider the demographics of our community. Not only will there be continued efforts to

develop the website, but we must also consider ways to address language barriers, given the large demographic of Spanish speakers in El Paso County.

Future Quad teams and other partners will need to discover a way to utilize the youth suicide prevention network in Colorado Springs in order to find the funds and expertise necessary to advertise and promote this webpage effectively. Since a resource is only as useful as its accessibility and relevance, we encourage future leaders of this project to prioritize this webpage's continued integration into the El Paso County youth suicide prevention network. Prioritizing the website's integration should help sustain energy and creativity in the development of its content.

Conclusion

Youth suicide continues to present itself as a pressing and heartbreaking issue in our community. The primary aim of this work was to examine the landscape of resources that already exists in El Paso County and identify any gaps that our Quad team might be able to help fill. Our countless interviews with community stakeholders resulted in the resoundingly clear message that communication is key. While El Paso County does not necessarily suffer from a lack of monetary resources dedicated to suicide prevention, the chains of communication between—the various stakeholders were lacking. Community professionals shared with us that this has resulted in more of a disjointed pool of resources, rather than an interconnected web and safety net for youth in Colorado Springs.

One of our team's central considerations throughout the final weeks of this Quad experience has been this project's longevity and sustainability. Knowing that we will not be around to continue the work, our goal has been to compile all the necessary information and contacts to establish a transparent vision of how we believe this project should continue in order to best serve the El Paso community. Initiatives such as the El Paso County Youth Suicide Prevention Working Group have made substantial progress in building connections and collaborative spaces. We believe that the foundation we have created, along with the expansion of this work by future leaders, will prove to be a significant and sustained contribution to their efforts. Through this webpage, professionals and community members alike who are in crisis or looking to offer support will be more aware of all this region has to offer. Our hope is that people

will be encouraged to contribute to and take advantage of the youth suicide prevention networkin hopes of saving lives in El Paso County.

Appendix

This appendix provides contact information for each of the community stakeholders we contacted throughout the course of this project. Intentional conversations with a variety of professionals in the youth suicide prevention space were at the core of our work. This communication helped us to better understand the existing network in El Paso County and the gaps that still need to be addressed.

Name	Organization	Contact Information
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
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