



UNIVERSITY of
MASSACHUSETTS
150 Infirmery Way
Amherst, MA 01003-9288

University Health Services

voice: 413.577.5000

fax: 413.577.5488

PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

Contact: Karen Dunbar Scully, UHS Communications & Marketing
(413) 577-5077; kdscully@uhs.umass.edu

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UHS' Mental Health Services awarded suicide prevention grant

AMHERST, Mass. – The Mental Health Services (MHS) division of University Health Services at UMass Amherst has been awarded a three-year, \$225,000 grant to expand its suicide prevention efforts.

The funding from the U.S. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) will be used to train key individuals and groups on campus to recognize students at risk of suicide and provide appropriate intervention. UMass Amherst is one of only 46 recipients in the country to receive the funding.

Grant monies will help implement a 'gatekeeper' model developed by Syracuse University as part of a SAMHSA grant last year. The approach provides suicide prevention skills training to those regularly interacting with students – including health care providers, housing staff, administration, faculty, coaches, fraternity and sorority leaders, police and others. The project's research component will enable project leaders to improve tracking, measure effectiveness and share results.

College students can face serious mental and behavioral health issues, including depression and binge drinking. The challenge for mental health professionals is how to identify and help them; nationwide, fewer than 20% of students who die by suicide are past or current clients of their school's counseling center. However, students who do connect with services often benefit significantly. UMass Amherst surveys have shown that over 80% of those who sought mental health care said services helped them stay in school and improve academic performance.

The project team includes principal investigator and MHS director Harry Rockland-Miller, Ph.D.; co-principal investigator and lead evaluator Gloria DiFulvio, Ph.D., of the School of Public Health; and evaluation manager Janet Mazziotti, M.S., M.S.W., of the School of Public Health.

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INTERVIEW OPPORTUNITY:

- Harry Rockland-Miller, Ph.D., Director, Mental Health Services