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Topic: A Mixed Methods Effectiveness Study of YMHFA Training of Teachers and School Staff in the Cherokee Nation.

Project Summary

Among youth from rural American Indian (AI) communities, disproportionately high rates of suicide and substance use disorders, combined with limited access to mental health and addiction services, underscore widening disparities in prevalence and access to care. The concerning epidemiology of mental illness and the dearth of resources available for rural AI youth indicate a need for stronger, culturally relevant mental health promotion efforts earlier in risk trajectories for young people from these communities.

Together, Emory University and Cherokee Nation Behavioral Health (CNBH) of rural northeastern Oklahoma have a strong collaborative partnership for mental health intervention research. The objective of this study is to evaluate the effectiveness of Youth Mental Health First Aid (YMHFA) training of school teachers and staff for the identification and referral to treatment of high school students in the Cherokee Nation. We will use mixed methods with longitudinal follow up to assess effectiveness and cultural relevance of YMHFA instructor training. Findings from this research may inform future implementation of YMHFA to better meet the needs of school-based trainees working with adolescents to improve mental health outcomes in rural AI communities.