



Young Man with a Plan Newsletter

May 2022

Mental Health Awareness Month

At YMWAP we center mental wellness, which has been a growing concern during the past two+ years. We check in at every weekly session, and normalize discussing depression and anxiety, and seeking help and therapy when needed.

In January YMWAP welcomed an intern, Mike Mello, a senior Public Health major from Fairfield University. He delivered several projects for YMWAP, including draft policies for mental health referrals, a Clinical Social Worker job description for our career library, and valuable research on the current state of youth mental health.

To begin his research, Mike interviewed YMWAP staff, mentors, teachers, guidance counselors, social workers, and the Senior Director of Social Work and Family Services at Boston Children's Hospital to understand what they were seeing in the youth they served. These front-line workers described a serious mental health crisis, with significant growth in depression, anxiety, and suicidal ideation. They saw a mainly negative impact from social media use, with youth using phones "to soothe and distract," youth reluctant to get help, and inadequate resources for those in acute need.

Mike then created a survey for YMWAP students, asking them about their mental health status, how social media use helped or hurt them, and how comfortable they feel seeking mental health help. Over half of the students reported negative impacts on mental health from Covid. They described feeling lonely, depressed, isolated, scared, and lazy. They described social media as positive or neutral in keeping them connected and entertained, though some said social media made them feel mad, overwhelmed, or lonely. They named their mother as the person they would most likely talk to about mental health concerns. Those who would not reach out for help named pride, fear of being judged, and anxiety as obstacles.



"I had an amazing experience with Young Man with A Plan. The skills and knowledge that I learned as an intern are going to be extremely beneficial in my career as a licensed clinical social worker. YMWAP is an incredible organization doing really impactful work." Mike enters UConn in the fall, pursuing his MSW.
Thanks, Mike!

Stay well, and please don't hesitate to reach out. youngmanwithaplan.org