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## **Transcript - Choosing Goals**

Every campus is different, so each will require its own unique goals and strategies to best address the specific challenges your campus faces related to student well-being.

After reviewing the information you've gathered as well as the essentials that need to be in place first, select ONE key need that you feel you can reasonably address in a specified amount of time (e.g., this academic year). It's natural to want to try to do it all immediately by selecting several goals, but this is almost guaranteed to result in frustration and failure. Comprehensive suicide prevention is best done incrementally, one step at a time.

Remember, a goal is WHAT you want to accomplish. Later, we'll discuss strategies, which outline HOW you are going to accomplish your goal. It's tempting to want to pick a strategy, without first thinking about what goal you are actually trying to accomplish, but we advise against that. Choose a goal first.

We've provided a list of possible goals on the handout "Choosing a Goal". You'll notice that most goals are linked to one of the key tasks we outlined in the comprehensive suicide prevention model in our introductory video. Don't limit yourself to what is on this example list; these are just some ideas to help get your imagination going.

And don't forget, good goals are SMART. They are Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, and Time-limited.

A specific goal is clear about what you are trying to accomplish, with whom, and in what circumstance. For example, the goal "decrease average waiting times for students seeking counseling services at the campus counseling center" meets each of these criteria.

A measurable goal means that you can measure the outcome so that you can track progress and know when you have accomplished the goal. Stating that you will "improve student resilience" is not measurable, but stating that you will "significantly improve students' self-rated ability to handle stress on items on the annual American College Health Assessment" allows you to easily identify whether or not you met your goal, using statistical analysis. This example also highlights the benefits of doing some type of campus assessment – many goals will rely on assessment data to determine whether you were successful in meeting your goal.

An attainable goal is one that you are able to accomplish. It should be challenging and require work so that you are doing something meaningful, but not so difficult that it is not achievable.



Remember, good comprehensive planning is done in small steps, so don't try to change the world with a single goal. Stating that you will ensure every student has meaningful connections with faculty, staff, and peers may be impossible to achieve, but aiming to increase the percentage of students who report meaningful connections or aiming to increase the self-reported satisfaction of students with their connections are potentially more feasible goals.

A relevant goal is one that addresses a real problem. Many campuses make decisions about prevention initiatives by simply choosing what's easiest or available to them, rather than considering what their campus most needs. For example, our office offers free gatekeeper trainings. While we certainly want you to take advantage of those, it would be a waste of resources to offer trainings for faculty if faculty already feel comfortable making referrals and are not interested in attending, or if students on your campus generally don't talk to faculty about personal matters. Furthermore, offering trainings could be problematic if it results in increased referrals but your counseling center is not equipped to handle an increase in clients. One way to determine if your goal is the right one is to gather some information about your campus needs – to learn more, refer to the video on Gathering Information.

Finally, goals should be time-limited. Setting a deadline for when you want to accomplish the goal helps to make it a priority by creating a sense of urgency for getting the work done. In the college setting, we suggest setting goals that can be accomplished within a semester or an academic year at most. Longer-term goals can result in people losing focus and motivation to carry out the work. This may mean very large goals need to be broken down into smaller steps that can be accomplished one semester or year at a time. Doing so will help everyone involved to feel like they are making progress and want to keep the momentum going.

So, take some time to write your first SMART goal. Once you think you have it, ask yourself, and maybe even a colleague or two - is it Specific? Measurable? Attainable? Relevant? and Time-limited?

Once you've determined your goal – or what you want to accomplish - you can move on to selecting the strategies you'll use to make that goal a reality.