



Mountain Plains (HHS Region 8)

MHTTC

Mental Health Technology Transfer Center Network
Funded by Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

Thank you for joining us today!

- Please Note:
- We all attendees are muted for the presentation portion of today's session.
 - Today's presentation will be recorded.

SAMHSA
Substance Abuse and Mental Health
Services Administration

The COMET™ Conversation

Maret Felzien
Kristen Curcija, MPH
Sadie Fritzler

December 12, 2023



Housekeeping Items

If we need to end today's presentation unexpectedly, we will follow up with you using your registration information.

Today's session is being recorded, and we ask that all attendees mute themselves until the end of the presentation.

Remember to ask questions using the chat feature.

Slides and resources for today's session can be accessed on our program website.

Certificates of attendance are available for today's session.

To receive a certificate of attendance, you must view at least 50% of today's presentation.

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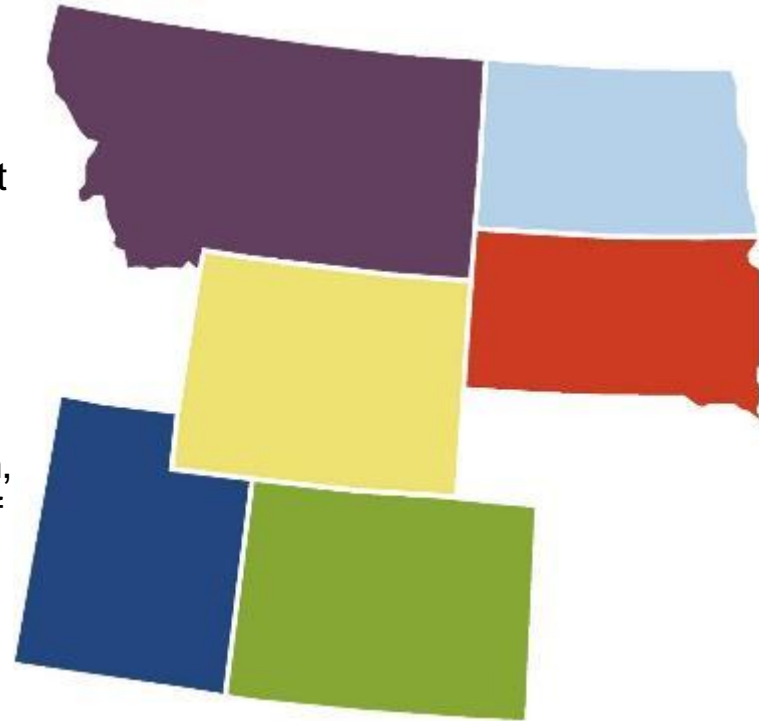
At the time of this presentation, Miriam E. Delphin-Rittmon, Ph.D. served as acting SAMHSA Assistant Secretary. The opinions expressed herein are the views of Maret Felzien, Kristen Curcija, MPH, and Sadie Fritzler, and do not reflect the official position of the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), or SAMHSA. No official support or endorsement of DHHS, SAMHSA, for the opinions described in this presentation is intended or should be inferred.

The work of the Mountain Plains MHTTC is supported by grant H79SM081792 from the Department of Health and Human Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.

The Mountain Plains Mental Health Technology Transfer Center

The Mountain Plains Mental Health Technology Transfer Center (Mountain Plains MHTTC) provides training and technical assistance to individuals who serve persons with mental health concerns throughout Region 8 (Colorado, Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, Utah, and Wyoming).

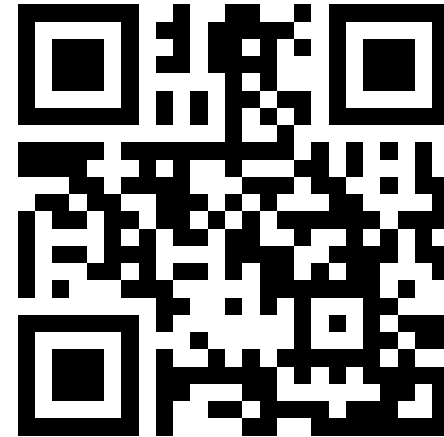
We belong to the Technology Transfer Center (TTC) Network, a national network of training and technical assistance centers serving the needs of mental health, substance use, and prevention providers. The work of the TTC Network is under a cooperative agreement by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Service Administration (SAMHSA).



Evaluation Information

The MHTTC is funded through SAMHSA to provide this training. As part of receiving this funding, we are required to submit data related to the quality of this event.

At the end of today's training please take a moment to complete a **brief** survey about today's training.



<https://ttc-gpra.org/P?s=264042>

Land Acknowledgement Statement

Today, the University of North Dakota rests on the ancestral lands of the Pembina and Red Lake Bands of Ojibwe and the Dakota Oyate - presently existing as composite parts of the Red Lake, Turtle Mountain, White Earth Bands, and the Dakota Tribes of Minnesota and North Dakota. We acknowledge the people who resided here for generations and recognize that the spirit of the Ojibwe and Oyate people permeates this land. As a university community, we will continue to build upon our relations with the First Nations of the State of North Dakota - the Mandan, Hidatsa, and Arikara Nation, Sisseton-Wahpeton Oyate Nation, Spirit Lake Nation, Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, and Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa Indians.



The MHTTC Network uses affirming, respectful and recovery-oriented language in all activities. That language is:

STRENGTHS-BASED
AND HOPEFUL

INCLUSIVE AND
ACCEPTING OF
DIVERSE CULTURES,
GENDERS,
PERSPECTIVES,
AND EXPERIENCES

HEALING-CENTERED AND
TRAUMA-RESPONSIVE

INVITING TO INDIVIDUALS
PARTICIPATING IN THEIR
OWN JOURNEYS

PERSON-FIRST AND
FREE OF LABELS

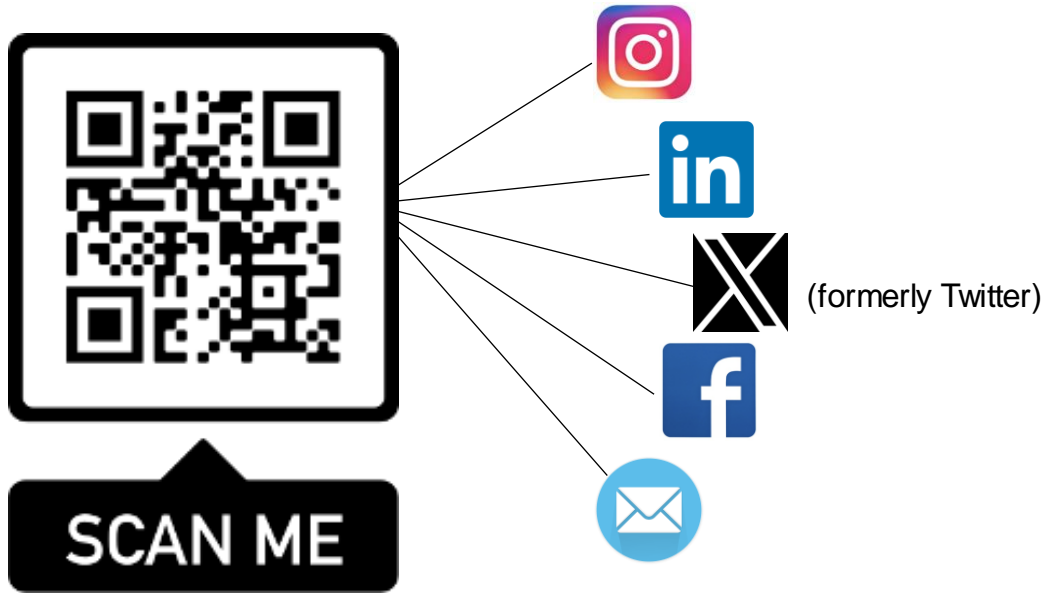
NON-JUDGMENTAL AND
AVOIDING ASSUMPTIONS

RESPECTFUL, CLEAR
AND UNDERSTANDABLE

CONSISTENT WITH
OUR ACTIONS,
POLICIES, AND PRODUCTS

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The COMET™ Conversation

Maret Felzien
Kristen Curcija, MPH
Sadie Fritzler

December 12, 2023



Changing Our Mental and Emotional Trajectory to Improve Mental Health in Rural Communities

Maret Felzien, MA, Kristen Curcija, MPH & Sadie Fritzler, MA

High Plain Research Network

University of Colorado Department of Family Medicine

December 2023

Disclosure Statement

We have no financial investments and receive no funding from any of the private companies talked about in this presentation.

No off-label medication use will be discussed.

Stress Points

- Holidays can be tough. So can September. So can July.
- Symptoms of “holiday” blues --
 - Persistent or re-occurring feelings of sadness; sense of MEH, changes in appetite/weight; changes in sleep patterns; depressed or irritable mood; difficulty concentrating; feelings of worthlessness or guilt; feeling more tired than usual; feeling tense, worried, or anxious; loss of pleasure in doing things you used to enjoy

WELLNESS

VULNERABLE SPACE

CRISIS

Usual Activities
No MEB health issues
Managing MEB health

“Holiday” blues

Acute event
Grief
Early MEB issue
Farm
Family
Finance
Loneliness
COVID
Pain

988
Crisis hotlines

Mental health first aid.
Too late.
Training too long

Law enforcement
Incarceration



SCENARIO 1:

I run into an acquaintance in the hardware store parking lot. This is the third time I have seen him in the last two months. He appears even more disheveled and sadder than the last few times.

SCENARIO 2:

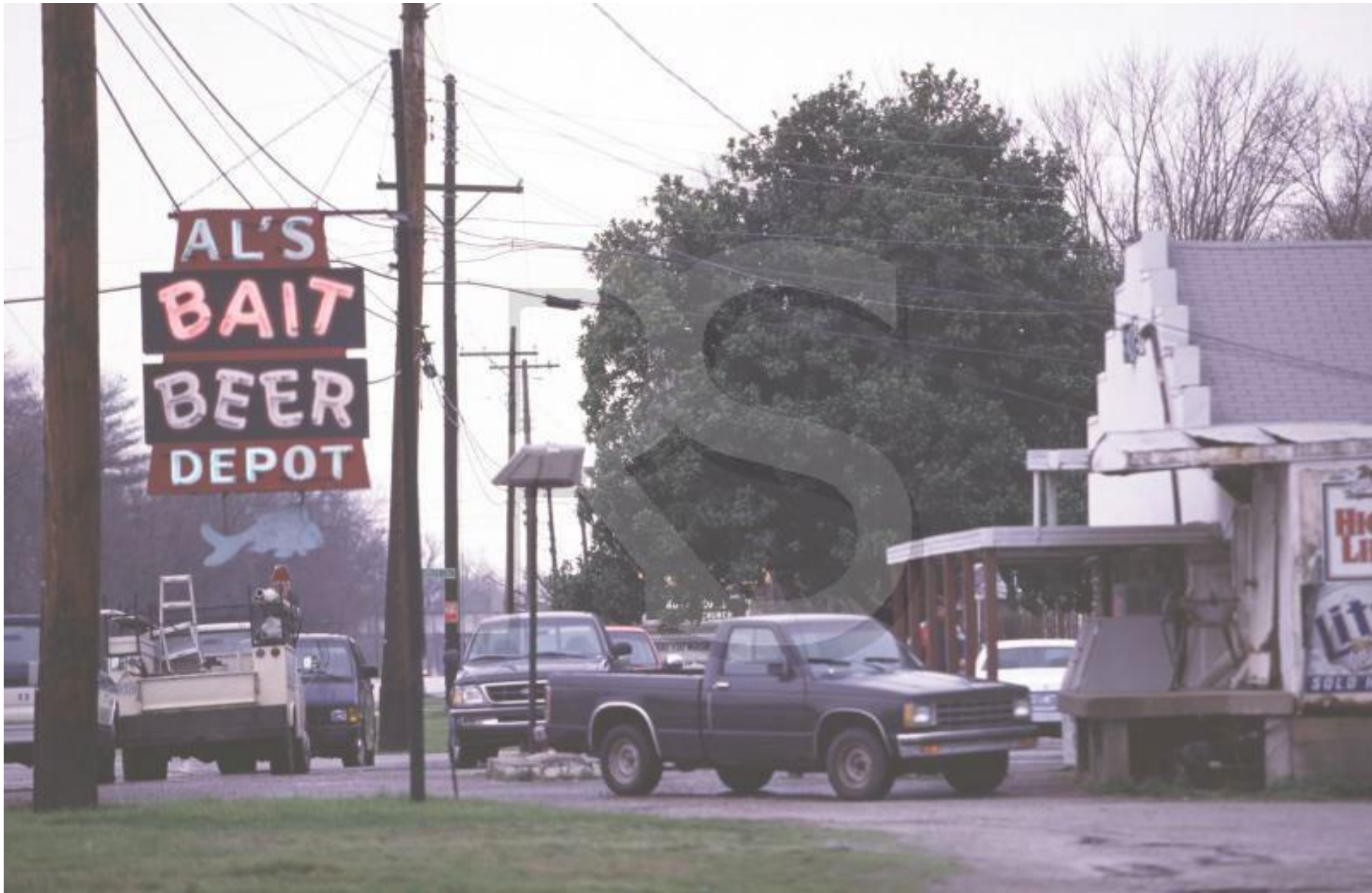
I run into a neighbor in the grocery store. She appears to be distracted and doesn't have much to say when I pass her in the aisle. She has missed book club the last two months, a group that she helped create.



How do you check-in with a friend or acquaintance?

Nobody has responded yet.

Hang tight! Responses are coming in.



When you check-in with a friend or acquaintance, where does this normally happen?

Nobody has responded yet.

Hang tight! Responses are coming in.

COMET:

A community-based intervention to activate community members and provide them with language, tools and confidence to intervene when they notice someone around them is unwell – and before crisis occurs.

High Plains Research Network (HPRN)

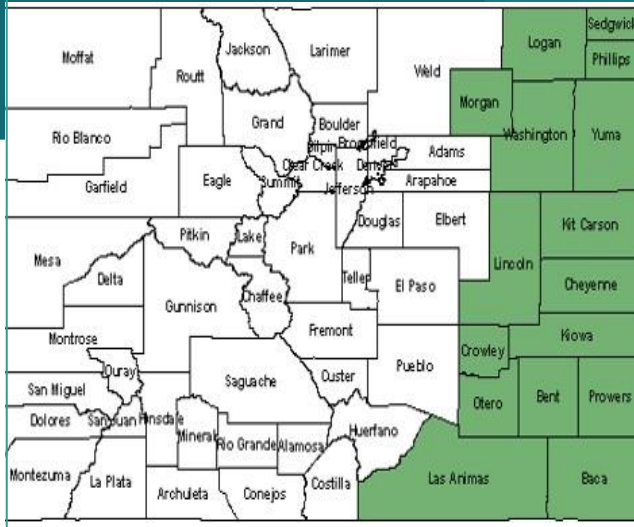


Figure 1. HPRN Region in Colorado

- Housed at the University of Colorado Department of Family Medicine
- 16 counties of eastern rural and frontier Colorado
- 54 primary care practices
- 16 hospitals
- 10 local public health departments
- 160,000 people
- Community Advisory Council (C.A.C.)



Figure 2. HPRN Community Advisory Council members

Conversational Gravity Assist

Be “the other person”

WELLNESS

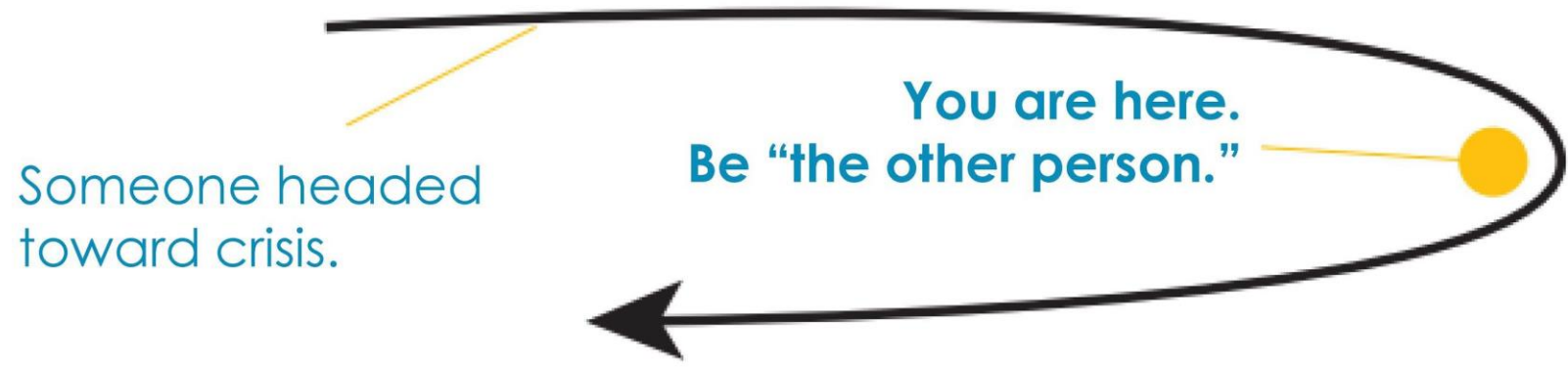
VULNERABLE SPACE

CRISIS



Conversational Gravity Assist

Be "the other person"



Mental Health First Aid,
Crisis Hotlines,
Law Enforcement

Community-based **safe venues** for emotional expression

COMET: The Questions/Statements

- | |
|---|
| 1. NOT YOURSELF |
| 2. HOW ARE YOU? |
| 3. OBSERVATION OF MOOD OR BEHAVIOR |
| 4. FAMILY OR SOCIAL LIFE |
| 5. INVITATION TO ENGAGE |
| 6. <i>OPTIONAL</i> : SELF-DISCLOSURE |
| 7. <i>OPTIONAL</i> : HOW TO HELP MORE OR EXIT THE CONVERSATION SUPPORTIVELY |

COMET Community Training Program

- ✓ Designed to be accessible and used by a wide range of community members
- ✓ Conducted in a variety of settings, in-person and virtually (flexible)
- ✓ 90 minutes – 2 hours (max)
- ✓ Small or large groups
- ✓ Includes didactic portion and role-playing with scenarios tailored to local community/group

»» COMET Train the Trainer Program

Evaluation

- Pre/Post survey on training structure, content, and intention to use the COMET questions
- Trainer “Field Note”
- Semi-structured interviews with trainees to understand who is using the questions, and how those interactions have gone

Results

- 90+ Community Trainings
- 900+ Attendees
- Colorado, Wisconsin, Wyoming, California
- Held at Barn Sale, Elks Club, Sheriff's Office, school districts, community colleges ag departments, volunteer fire departments, primary care practices, veterans groups
- Partnerships with local mental health organizations and Extension Agents

Table 1. COMET Training Characteristics (n = 308)

<u>Age</u>	<u>n</u>	<u>%</u>
18 - 24	16	5
25 - 36	65	22
37 - 64	169	58
65+	27	9
No answer	4	1
<u>Sex</u>		
Male	88	30
Female	187	64
No answer	3	1
<u>Occupation</u>		
Farmer/Rancher	31	10
Insurance/Banker	2	1
Retail	4	1
Counselor	18	6
Pastor	4	1
Healthcare	29	9
Teacher	140	45
Other	116	38

Results

Table 1. Likelihood of telling someone you've noticed a change in mood/behavior (n=308)

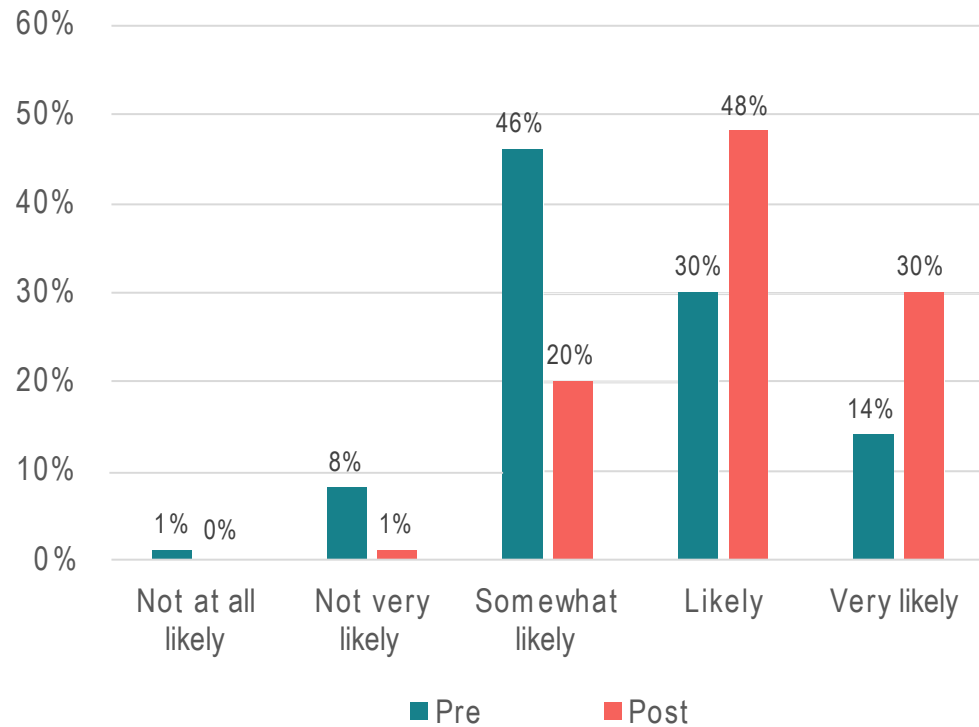
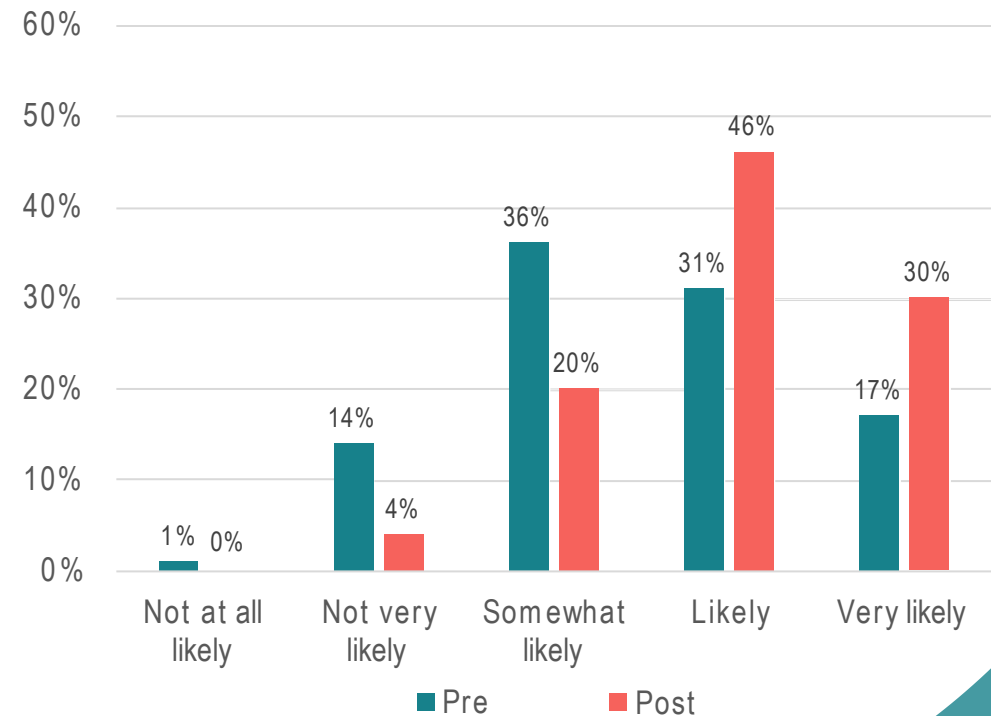


Table 2. Likelihood of inviting acquaintance/co-worker to tell you more about potentially emotional situation (n=308)



Results

Figure 1. On a scale of 1 – 10, how likely are you to use COMET in the next 3 months?

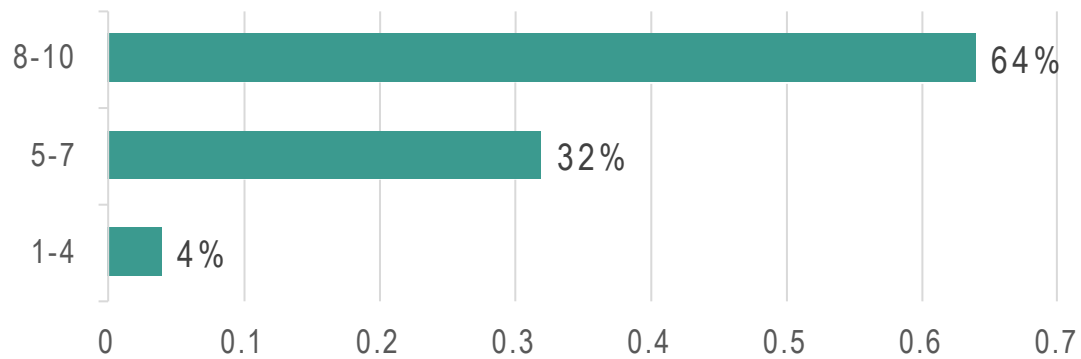
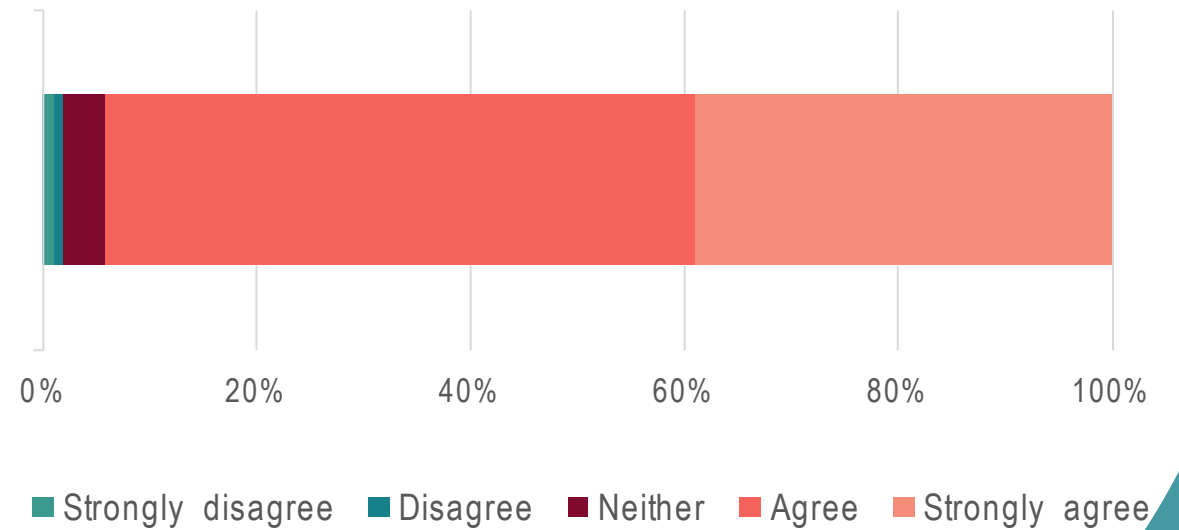


Figure 2. The training provided resources that can help me use COMET successfully



Field Note Comment:

“For many people Mental Health First Aid is too complex and goes too deep too quickly. It expects too much from the layperson. Some people need a gentler entry point, and COMET provides that very nicely.”

– a Regional COMET Trainer

Trainer Stories

A woman at our ag department who was part of the Extension group I did a COMET workshop for let me know that her husband has been secretly listening in on the MH trainings she's been attending (include COMET). He then received a call from a farmworker who reported that he was so stressed he was thinking about suicide and the soonest appointment he could get with a therapist was for the following week, and he wasn't sure he could hold on that long. Because her husband had heard about how to stay calm and listen, he was able to let the worker talk it out (without panicking) and then made a plan with him to go to the nearest ER. Long story short, the farmworker was admitted to the hospital and some members of the community made a plan for how to support him after he was released.

I'm so grateful for the good work you all have done and that we are able to share in it. I am certain we all are making a difference in people's lives.

- COMET Trainer in WI

ADDITIONALLY

- COMET materials are available in Spanish!
- Huge influx of folks getting receiving both the Train-the-Trainer and the Community Trainings
- Ready to conduct key informant interviews to enhance the evaluation
- Increased dissemination via presentations, publications, local newspaper articles, & website



COMET in the Media



The New York Times

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Aching from a string of farmer suicides and other rural mental health challenges, neighbors in eastern Colorado are learning how to check in on one another.

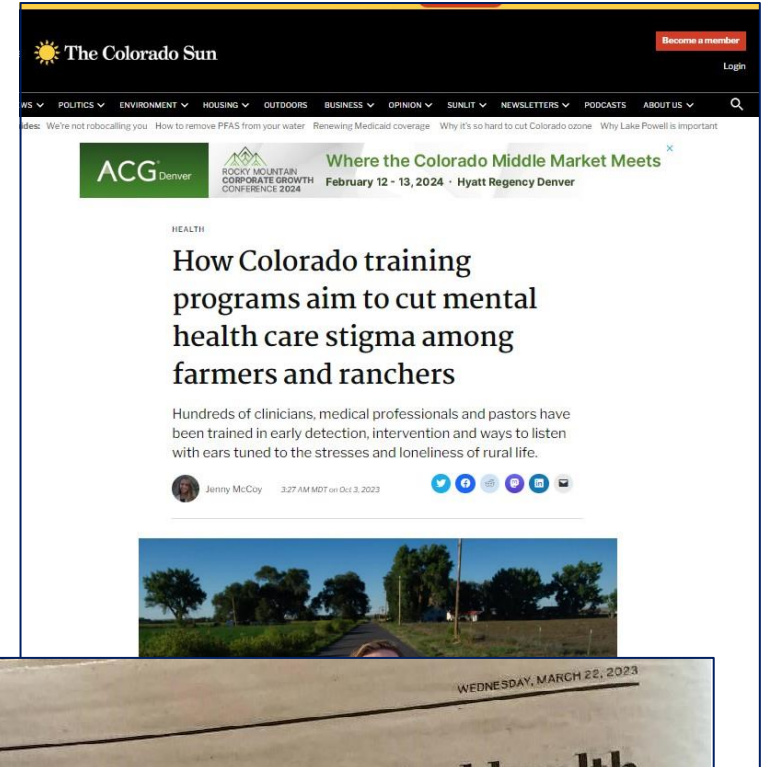
JOURNAL-ADVOCATE

LATEST HEADLINES

COMET: Locally-developed training to address mental health issues



By MARET FELZIEN | PUBLISHED: April 8, 2021 at 3:18 pm | UPDATED: April 20, 2021 at 9:23 am



The Colorado Sun

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Where the Colorado Middle Market Meets February 12 - 13, 2024 Hyatt Regency Denver

How Colorado training programs aim to cut mental health care stigma among farmers and ranchers

Hundreds of clinicians, medical professionals and pastors have been trained in early detection, intervention and ways to listen with ears tuned to the stresses and loneliness of rural life.

Jenny McCoy 3:27 AM MDT on Oct 3, 2023



20 NEWS SOUTH PLATTE SENTINEL

HIGH PLAINS RESEARCH NETWORK

How COMET has helped Colorado's mental health

By Ashley Espinoza and High Plains Research Network Media/News Group

It's not often that The New York Times visits eastern Colorado. However, a few months ago, it happened. Journalists were interested in learning what communities around the country are doing to address mental and emotional health. They stumbled upon the COMET Program. COMET (Changing our Mental and Emotional Trajectory) was developed by people living in eastern Colorado for rural community members. The program offers a "conversational guide" to talk with others

when you are concerned about someone else's mental and emotional well-being — before a crisis. The New York Times shared with the world the compassion, creativity, and resourcefulness of the people living in this region. COMET was created by the High Plains Research Network Community Advisory Council (C.A.C.) — a grass-roots group of ranchers, farmers, teachers, business managers, students, and retirees from eastern Colorado. Years ago, the C.A.C. wanted to figure out a way to support other's mental health needs — before a situation becomes a crisis. The C.A.C. learned through a process

of storytelling and analysis, called Appreciative Inquiry, that the pivotal event that helped a person facing a mental health challenge was often the act of someone else stepping in to make an observation, really ask how a person was doing, and listen. We call this being the "other" person. COMET offers a 90-minute training in using a "conversational guide." The program recognizes rural values of neighbor helping neighbor. It gives people permission to ask some harder questions and lowers the fears of asking tough mental health related questions. COMET does not ask community members to "be the fix" but encourages

all of us to remember the importance of being "the other person." The training includes how to exit those conversations in a supportive way. Over 600 people in Colorado and around the country who wanted to feel more confident to reach out have been trained, including business owners, agricultural community members, educators, bank lenders, allied health professionals, and students. The New York Times journalists spent four brief days in eastern Colorado. They learned about the profound stress devastating many of our farming and ranching businesses, families, and communities. They found COMET to be

another way of "inventing friendship." The many people who shared their stories showed them the desire rural community members have to help each other. To be willing to sometimes step outside of their comfort zones and ask another person, "How are you? No, really, how are you?" and make a difference in that person's life. If you want more information about the COMET Program, email us at COMET@cuanschutz.edu. The New York Times article can be found at https://medschool.cuanschutz.edu/family-medicine/about/news/communication-hub/new-york-times-on-the-high-plains.

Anything that's human is mentionable, and anything that is mentionable can be more manageable. When we can talk about our feelings, they become less overwhelming, less upsetting, and less scary. The people we trust with that important talk can help us know that we are not alone.

- Fred Rogers



B HIGH PLAINS RESEARCH NETWORK



How are you doing?

No, really ... (repeat)

out. —
What's happened
(to you)?

How's something
kept

traced
in

Excellent Rural Health Care Today

COMET@cuanschutz.edu

Thank You for Joining Us!

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