

**McDonough, Jim**

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**From:** Shern, David [shern@fmhi.usf.edu]  
**Sent:** Wednesday, February 18, 2004 9:10 AM  
**To:** Tami Clark (E-mail); Jim McDonough (E-mail); 97Steve Roggenbaum (E-mail); Sharon Springer (E-mail)  
**Subject:** FW: For review

Jim et al,

I realized that I didn't include a copy of the communications plan in my response to you.

David

-----Original Message-----

**From:** Karen Bonsignori [mailto:KBonsignori@RobertsCommunications.com]  
**Sent:** Tuesday, February 17, 2004 3:53 PM  
**To:** FlynnL@childpsych.columbia.edu; shern@fmhi.usf.edu; rabinplanning@hotmail.com; jdoan@fmhi.usf.edu  
**Cc:** Deanne Roberts; Jessica Pawelkop  
**Subject:** For review

Attached is our initial communications plan for your review. Please call us to discuss at your convenience.  
Thanks!

<<teenscreen communications plan.doc>>

Karen Bonsignori  
Roberts Communications & Marketing, Inc.  
*A Member of the American Association of Advertising Agencies*

5405 Cypress Center Dr., Ste. 250  
Tampa, FL 33609  
813-281-0088  
813-281-0271 FAX

**Initial Communications Plan**  
**February – August 2004**

**Situation Analysis**

Although suicide is the third leading cause of death for high school students, it is the leading preventable cause of death. There are more than 42,000 high school students in Hillsborough County and more than 34,000 high school students in Pinellas County. According to national research, 19% of teens think about killing themselves and 9% make a suicide attempt. This means that more than 14,000 of Tampa Bay teens will have suicidal ideation and behavior this year. The suicide rate increases in males through the teen years, peaking in the early 20s. The female suicide rate changes little during this time. During the teen years, boys commit suicide four to six times more than girls. Suicide rates among whites are higher than among blacks. Youth suicide rates are highest in Southern and Western states.

Unlike current awareness-based suicide prevention programs in the Tampa Bay area, TeenScreen uses a case-finding approach that finds kids with depression and other disorders before they fall behind in school, end up in trouble or end their lives. For more than a decade, Columbia University has perfected TeenScreen, a reliable and easy screening program for depression, suicide risk and other mental disorders that pose a serious threat to health and academic success. The President's New Freedom Commission recognizes it as a model program for early identification of mental illness in the report on Mental Health.

Tampa Bay will be the third site in Florida to implement TeenScreen, but the first to use the services of a communications firm. Columbia University is currently offering the program to 400 additional communities. Program consultation, training, screen and assessment tools and technical assistance are offered free of charge.

In the Tampa Bay area, school clinicians are primarily concerned about potential liability, staffing/workload issues and funding for mental health follow-ups. Initial phone calls to a statewide child advocate indicate that the organization generally embraces the concept of large-scale mental health screenings, but would embrace it more fully if the funds were available to adequately care for the number of youth who are found to need help.

A recent comprehensive poll, sponsored by Columbia University, found overwhelming parent support in Florida for regular school screenings for all teens for depression and suicide risk.

The main objectives for the TeenScreen Program are to:

- Screen youth for the risk factors of suicide and a variety of mental health disorders
- Help communities establish permanent mental health screening programs for their youth

### **Communication goals**

The primary communication goals for the Tampa Bay TeenScreen program are:

- 1.) To foster an environment in Florida, beginning in Tampa Bay, which supports large-scale mental health screening programs for teens.
- 2.) To increase awareness about the importance of community involvement in children's mental health issues and treatment.
- 3.) To increase the percentage of parents that sign consent forms for screenings.

### **Primary target audiences**

The following are the primary target audiences in Tampa Bay and throughout the state of Florida:

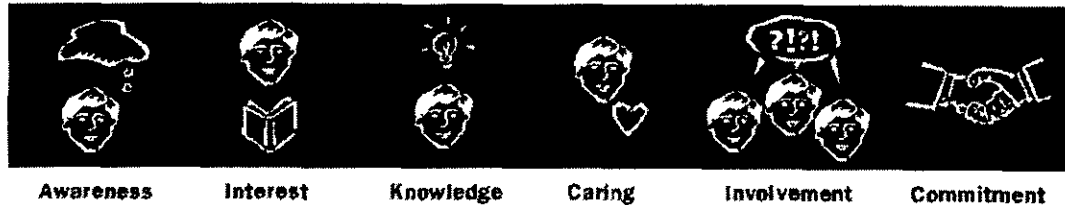
Elected officials  
 School district administrators  
 School administrators  
 Guidance counselors  
 Child advocate organizations  
 Child advocates  
 Community leaders  
 Business leaders  
 Mental health professionals  
 Teachers  
 Parents  
 Media  
 General public

### **Overarching Communications Strategy**

People do not make lasting and meaningful changes in their opinions, attitudes and behaviors without first progressing through the series of stages outlined below. In order to achieve the goal fostering an environment in which target audiences support and embrace large scale, school mental health screens for teens, they will need to be educated about how the benefits outweigh any perceived risks. In addition, audience-specific

concerns will need to be addressed. We will utilize communications tactics that will lead each audience segment through these stages toward our communications goals.

#### FROM AWARENESS TO BEHAVIOR CHANGE



Different types of media and communications tools will be recommended to help all target audiences progress through each stage. The public does not learn in the same way that an individual does, with focus, intensity and measurable progress, except in extraordinary circumstances such as the Exxon Valdez oil spill or the Columbine tragedy. Instead, the public gathers perceptions and fragments of information from a variety of sources to form a “sense of consciousness” about an issue that prepares it to act, decide, ignore or seek additional input. Since different audiences within the public learn about issues at different rates, from different sources, a variety of communications tactics will be used to reach all audience segments, and they will all work cumulatively to enhance and reinforce each other.

*This integrated marketing communications approach is more effective than traditional public relations. Integrated marketing communications means more people will see more of the organization’s message more times and in more meaningful ways. By layering and weaving a few clear, consistent and comprehensible messages through many mediums, you achieve far more impact and value from the marketing dollar.*

#### Phase I Tactics (Up to Initial Public Announcement)

**Tampa Tribune editorial series** – this series (beginning February 22, 2004) will examine the teen mental health issue from all angles, as well as offer an overview of the need for TeenScreen in the Tampa Bay community.

**TeenScreen Florida web page** – this web page will be added to the existing TeenScreen site. This continually updated page will explore the need for large-scale mental health screenings in Florida schools and celebrate its successes. A central feature will be a petition that people can “sign” to demonstrate their support for school mental health screenings. Many communications activities outlined in this plan will feature a call to action to drive people to this web page. In addition, a community support section will feature testimonials and highlight the national, state and local organizations and individuals that support TeenScreen in Florida.

**March 22<sup>nd</sup> press conference/town hall meeting** -- this press conference should be held in a large, easily accessible public venue such as Raymond James stadium. This is not because we anticipate a large crowd at the press conference, but rather to highlight the significance of the mental health problem in youth. We recommend highlighting the borders of 14,000 stadium seats with helium balloons so people can easily visualize the sheer magnitude of the annual teen suicide ideation problem in Hillsborough and Pinellas Counties. Press conference activities include:

- Exploring the need for TeenScreen in Tampa Bay
- Elected officials' support for mental health screenings in schools
- Community leader support for mental health screenings in schools
- Overview and successes of TeenScreen in other communities
- Review of Florida parents' poll data
- Recognition of key school partners (if we have them)
- Real people stories -- parents and teens
- Announcement of TeenScreen Florida web page

**St. Pete Times editorial briefing** -- this will be scheduled in the afternoon following the press conference.

**Press Kit** – key contents include:

- TeenScreen overview
- Teen mental health fact sheet
- Teen suicide fact sheet
- FAQs
- Announcement press release
- TeenScreen successes in other areas
- Overview of school partners
- Parent poll information

**Appearance on Kathy Fountain show** – an appearance on this top-rated lunchtime talk show by Laurie Flynn, David Shern and a THINK representative should be scheduled for March 22 (ideally) or March 23. A parent call-in segment should also be included.

**Fundraising support** – we will assist TeenScreen in identifying foundations and other public and private organizations and individuals to contact for further funding support.