

Better Today's. Better Tomorrow's. For Children's Mental Health.

Better Today's. Better Tomorrow's. began in 2000 as **Red Flags Idaho**. The project educates gatekeepers and caregivers on the signs and symptoms of mental disorders in children and youth. Red Flags, from 2000–2001, focused on adolescent depression, but the program has grown to include all disorders, suicide prevention, youth trauma, and Idaho's emerging Systems of Care for children's mental health.

Since its inception four years ago, Better Today's / **Red Flags** has trained approximately 1,500 professionals, parents, and community members statewide. The program, funded with an annual grant from the Governor's Generation of the Child Initiative, involves the Idaho State University Institute of Rural Health, the National Alliance for the Mentally Ill Idaho Chapter, the National Institute of Mental Health Constituency Outreach Program, the Office for the Advancement of Telehealth, Telehealth Idaho, and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.

Better Today's encourages early intervention and treatment for children and youth by 1) raising awareness of disorders to encourage early intervention; 2) lifting stigma about mental disorders as a barrier to treatment; and 3) encouraging early and effective treatment-seeking behavior. All participants in Better Today's trainings from 2000–2002 were asked to complete surveys 12–18 months after training. Three hundred surveys were mailed with a 40% return rate. The goal of the surveys was to examine whether the training changed negative attitudes (stigma) regarding mental illness, raised awareness of the latest scientific information, and encouraged treatment-seeking behavior. Satisfaction ratings about the trainings also were solicited. Specific results are:

- 80% believe mental illness is a physical brain disorder; 74% aware of stigma origins and effect of stigma on treatment-seeking behavior.
- 90% said they were introduced to new scientific information.
- 79% said they received new resources to help children; 87% said the information could help identify a youth in need; 70% learned methods to help youth cope with a mental disorder.
- 57% (est. 750+) reported helping a child; 51% (est. 750+) referred a child for treatment.
- 94% said they would refer others to the training.

For more information on Better Today's / **Red Flags Idaho**, e-mail Project Director Ann D. Kirkwood at redflags@isu.edu or phone toll free 1-800-562-8646. Red Flags is located at Idaho State University Boise Campus, 12301 W. Explorer Dr. #102, Boise, ID 83713.



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