



Trauma-Informed Peer Advocates

“Improving school
mental health one
peer at a time...”

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An illustration featuring the black silhouettes of five children in the foreground, looking towards the right. The background is a stylized classroom with light blue walls and yellow rectangular panels. The text 'Peers are so important!' is written in white at the bottom.

Peers are so important!

Background

Rise in mental health needs in schools, especially since Covid-19

High prevalence of traumatic experiences among youth

- Two-thirds of children reported experiencing at least 1 traumatic event by age 16
- 1 in every 7 children experienced childhood abuse or neglect in the past year
- U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Administration on Children, Youth and Families, Children's Bureau, 2022.

Increasing mental health concerns among children and adolescents

Lack of available resources in schools

- Despite the American School Counselors Association's recommendation of 1 counselor per 250 students, Nebraska has a ratio of 1 counselor per 369 students

Conclusion: Peer support is vitally important and underutilized!

Description of the Program



Title: The Trauma-Informed Peer Advocates program

“Trauma-Informed”

“Peer”

“Advocates”



A one-day (or two-day) intervention program targeted to train secondary school students as peer supporters



Five themes:

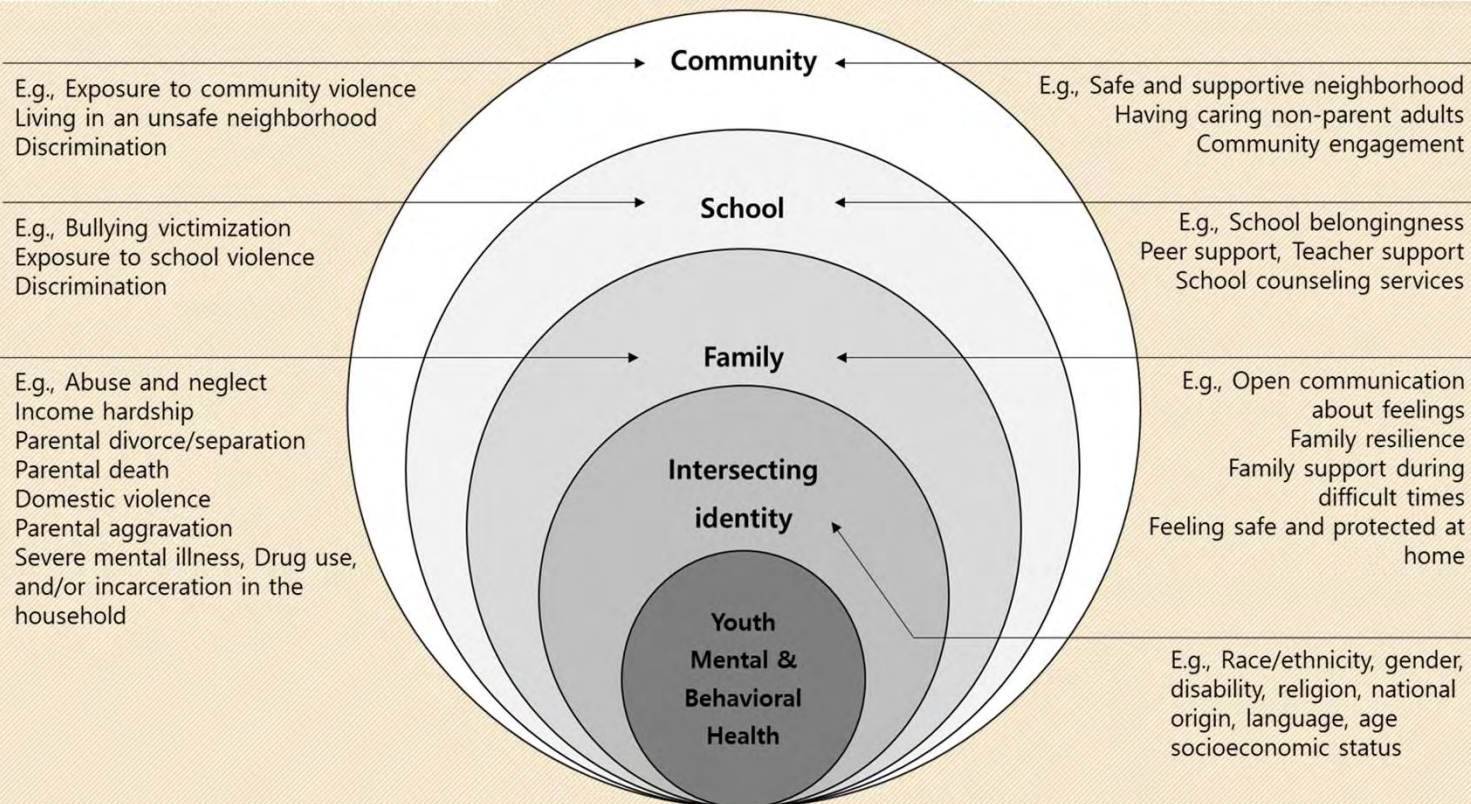
1. Mental health literacy
2. Basic counseling skills
3. Trauma-informed approach
4. Crisis intervention strategies
5. Multicultural and social justice advocacy

Background Cont.'

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Risk/Barrier Factors:
Adverse Childhood Experiences

Protective/Promotive Factors:
Positive Childhood Experiences



Program Description Cont.'

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Mental Health
Literacy

Basic
Counseling
Skills

Trauma-
Informed Care

Crisis
Intervention
Strategies

Multicultural &
Social Justice
Advocacy

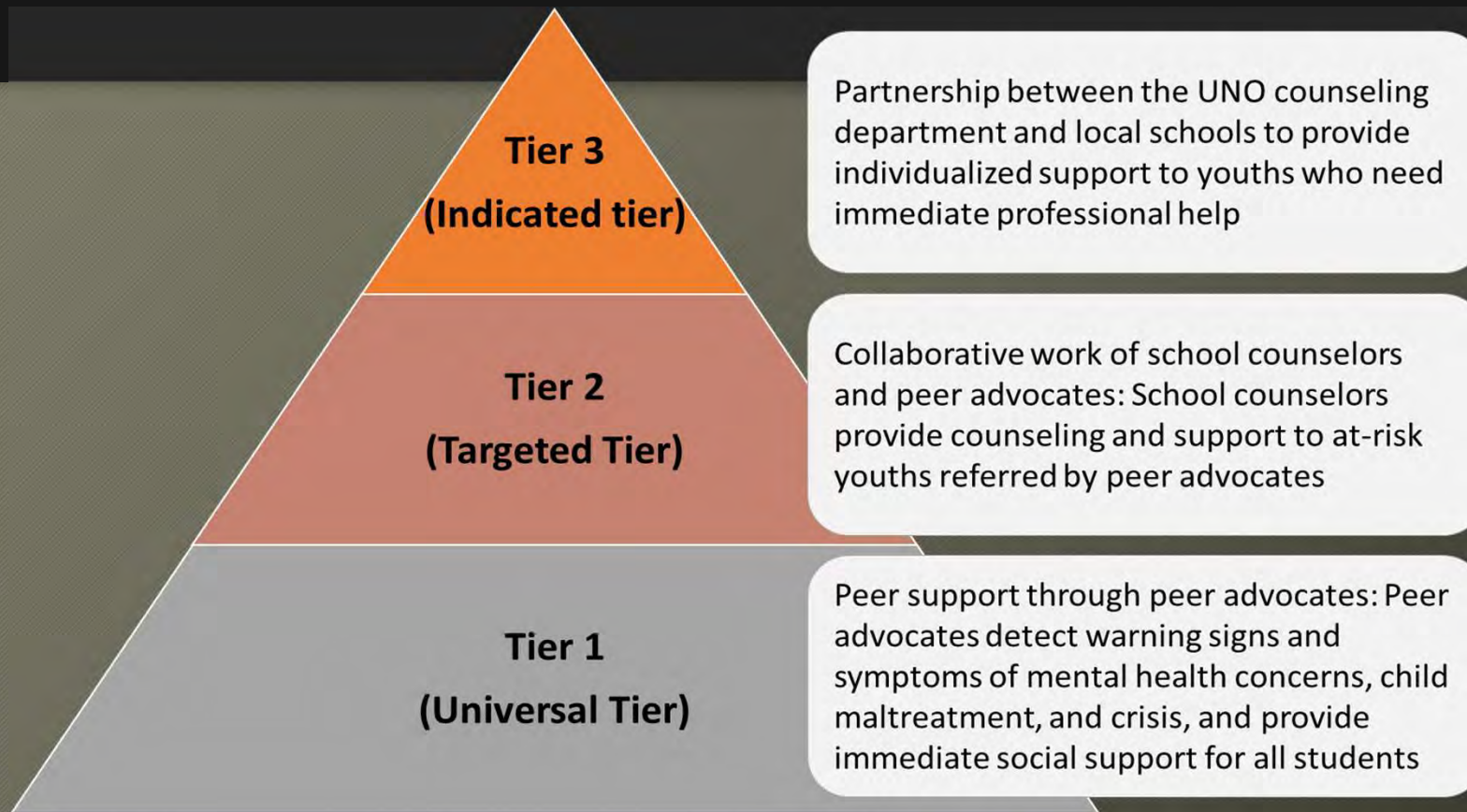
Program Research

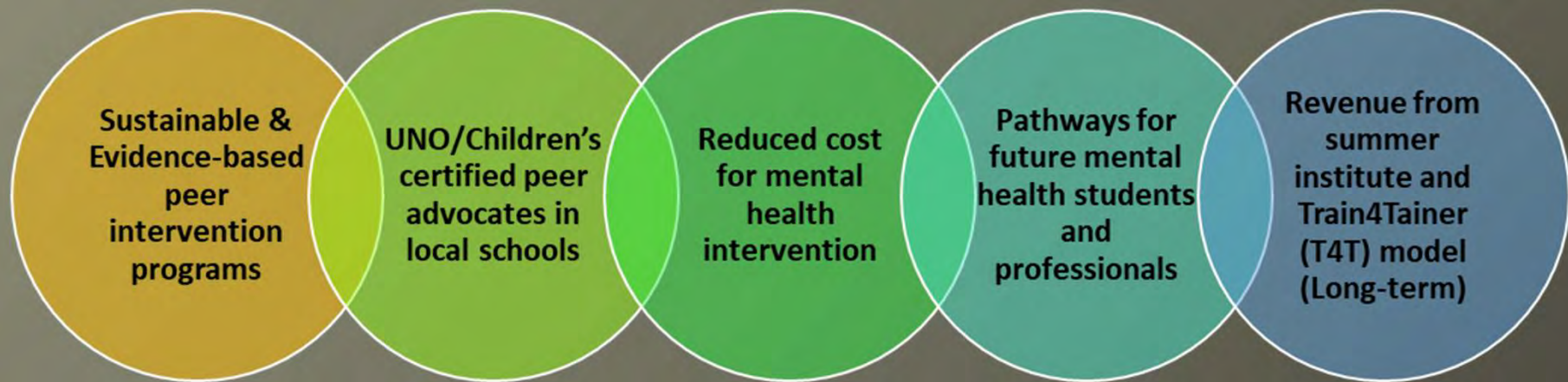
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- Training selected secondary school youths as trauma-informed peer advocates to promote positive youth development in school settings
- Informed by a Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) framework
- Peer advocates will work in collaboration with school counselors and other school personnel to implement the following measures:
 1. Identify potential risks and current symptoms of trauma, crisis, and other mental health issues in students/peers
 2. Provide immediate support for students who are in conflict or experiencing mental health challenges
 3. Referring “at-risk” cases to the school counselor (or others)

MTSS Framework

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Strengthening Youth Mental Health through Peer Capacity and Preventing Severe Issues

- 1) Facilitate Tier 1: Universal Support
- 2) Identify those needing Tier 2: Targeted Intervention

Early Identification of Behavioral and Mental Health Risks

Trauma-Informed Peer Advocates (TIPA)

Mental Health Literacy

Basic Interviewing Skills

Trauma-Informed Care

Crisis Intervention Strategies

Cultural Competence & Humility

Day 1		
<u>Time</u>	<u>Topic</u>	<u>Instructional Approaches</u>
<u>9:30 - 10:20</u>	Registration; Pre-Assessment Survey & Orientation	N/A
<u>10:30 - 11:20</u>	Module 1: Trauma and Trauma-Informed Approach	Lecture, Guided Discussion, Experiential Lesson
<u>11:20 - 12:20</u>	Lunch & Campus Tour (H&K, CAPS)	N/A
<u>12:20 - 1:10</u>	Module 2: Mental Health Literacy	Lecture, Guided Discussion, Experiential Lesson
<u>1:20 - 2:10</u>	Module 3: Crisis Intervention Strategies	Lecture, Guided Activity, Role Play
Day 2		
<u>Time</u>	<u>Topic</u>	<u>Instructional Approaches</u>
<u>9:30 - 10:20</u>	Module 4: Basic Counseling Skills I	Role Play, Demonstration
<u>11:20 - 12:20</u>	Module 5: Multicultural and Social Justice Advocacy (Shift with Module 6)	Lecture, Reflective Exercise, Intergroup Dialogue
<u>11:20 - 12:20</u>	Lunch & Campus Tour (Criss Library, MBSC)	N/A
<u>12:20 - 1:10</u>	Module 6: Basic Counseling Skills II (Shift with Module 5)	Lecture, Guided Activity, Role Play
<u>1:20 - 2:10</u>	Post-Assessment Survey & Certificate and Ceremony	N/A

Benefits for Students

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Participating students gain a comprehensive understanding of their role as peer advocates within the school environment



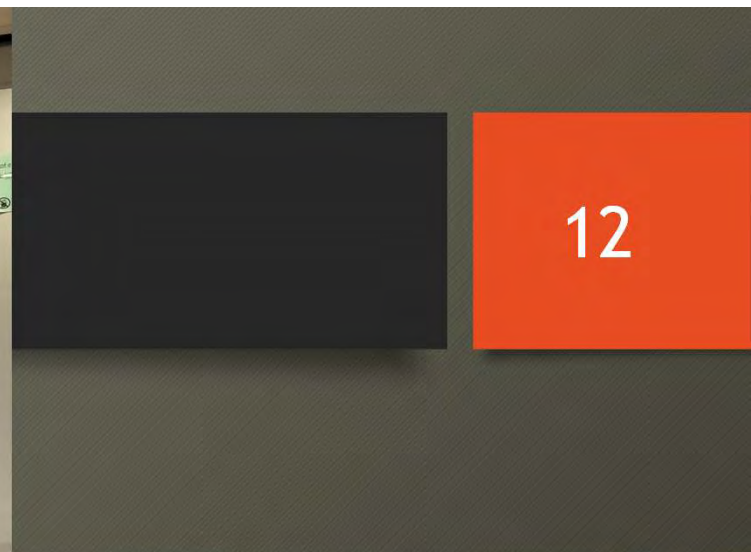
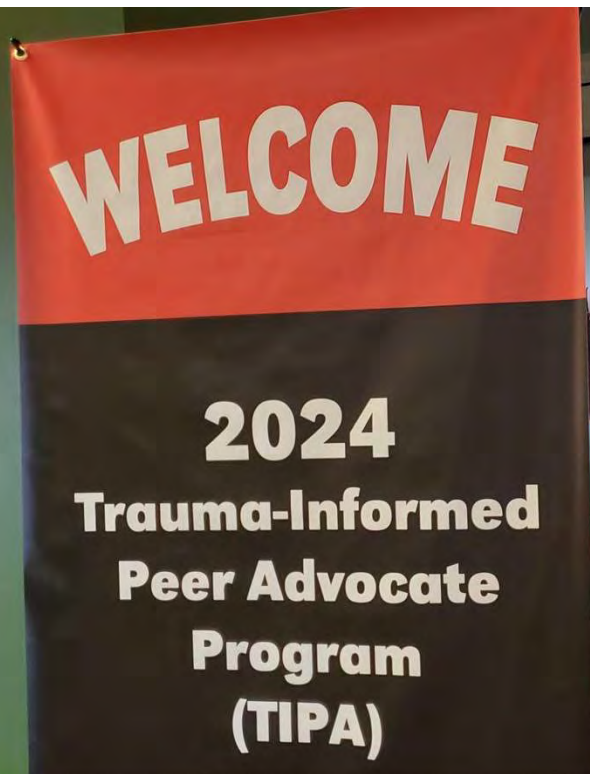
Transportation (i.e., bus) from School to the UNO campus

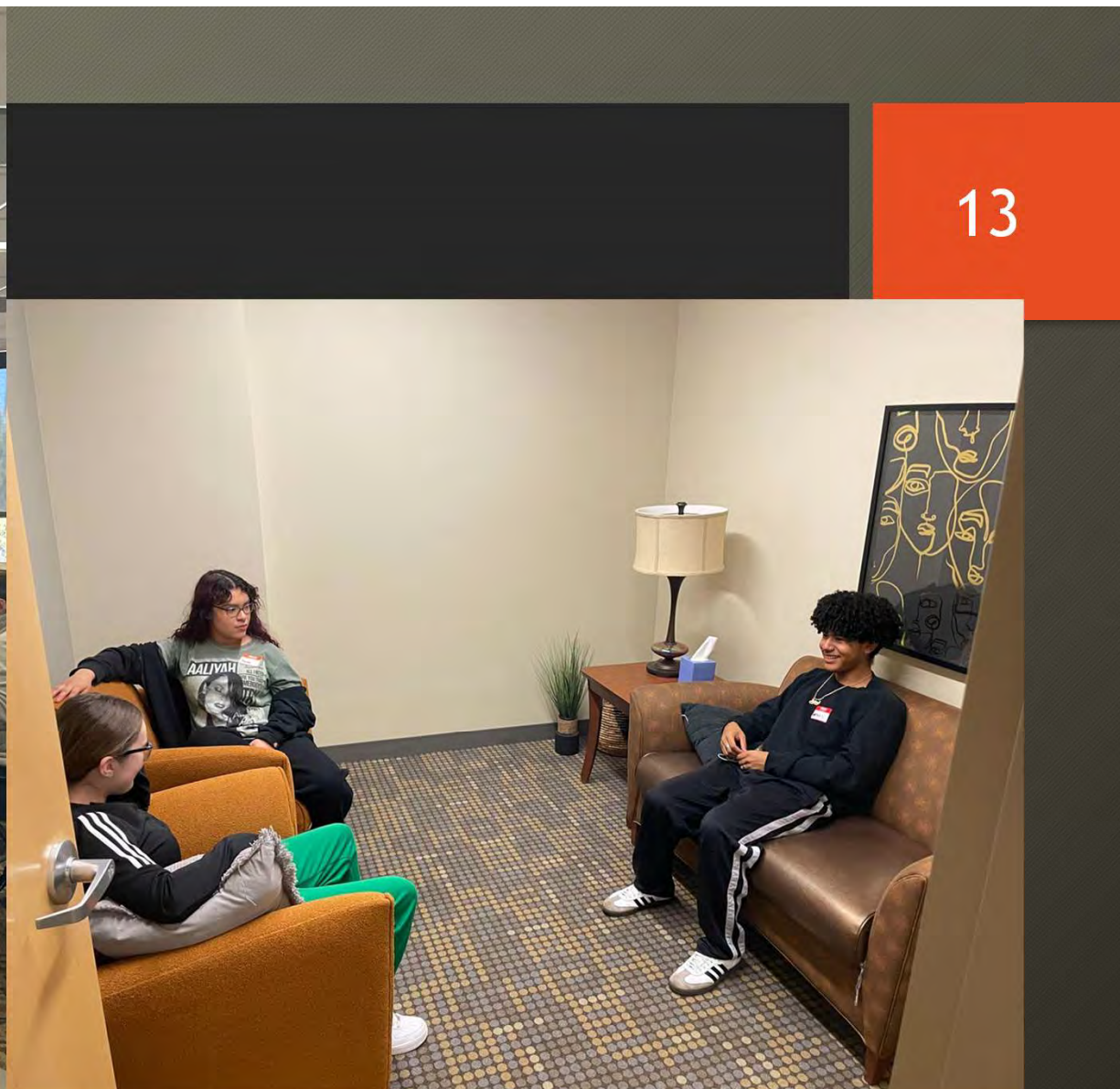


Complimentary breakfast and lunch provided



Participants receive a certificate of completion







And Students Said...

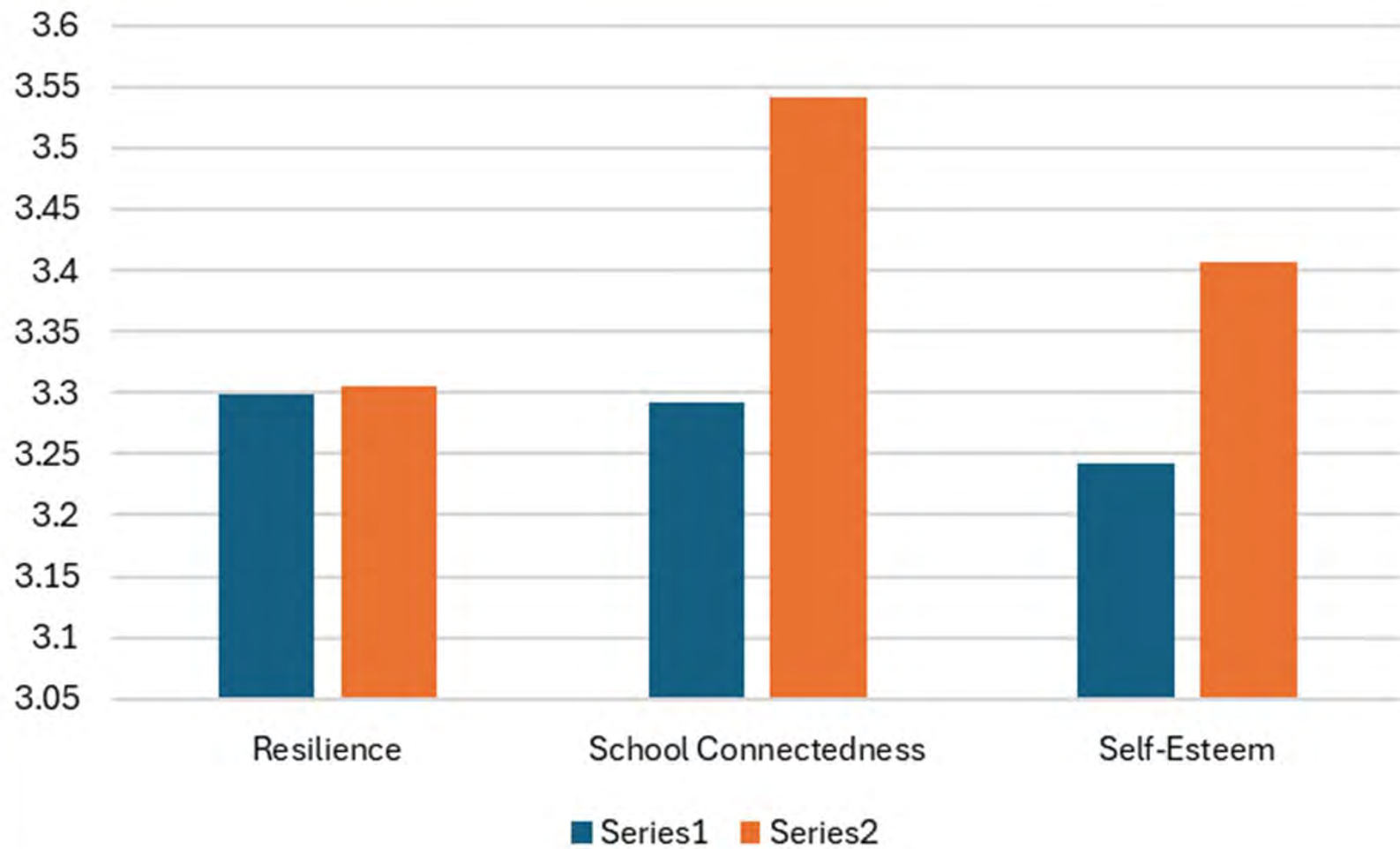
"The most impactful activity was the role playing because it kind of showed **what my future might look like.**"

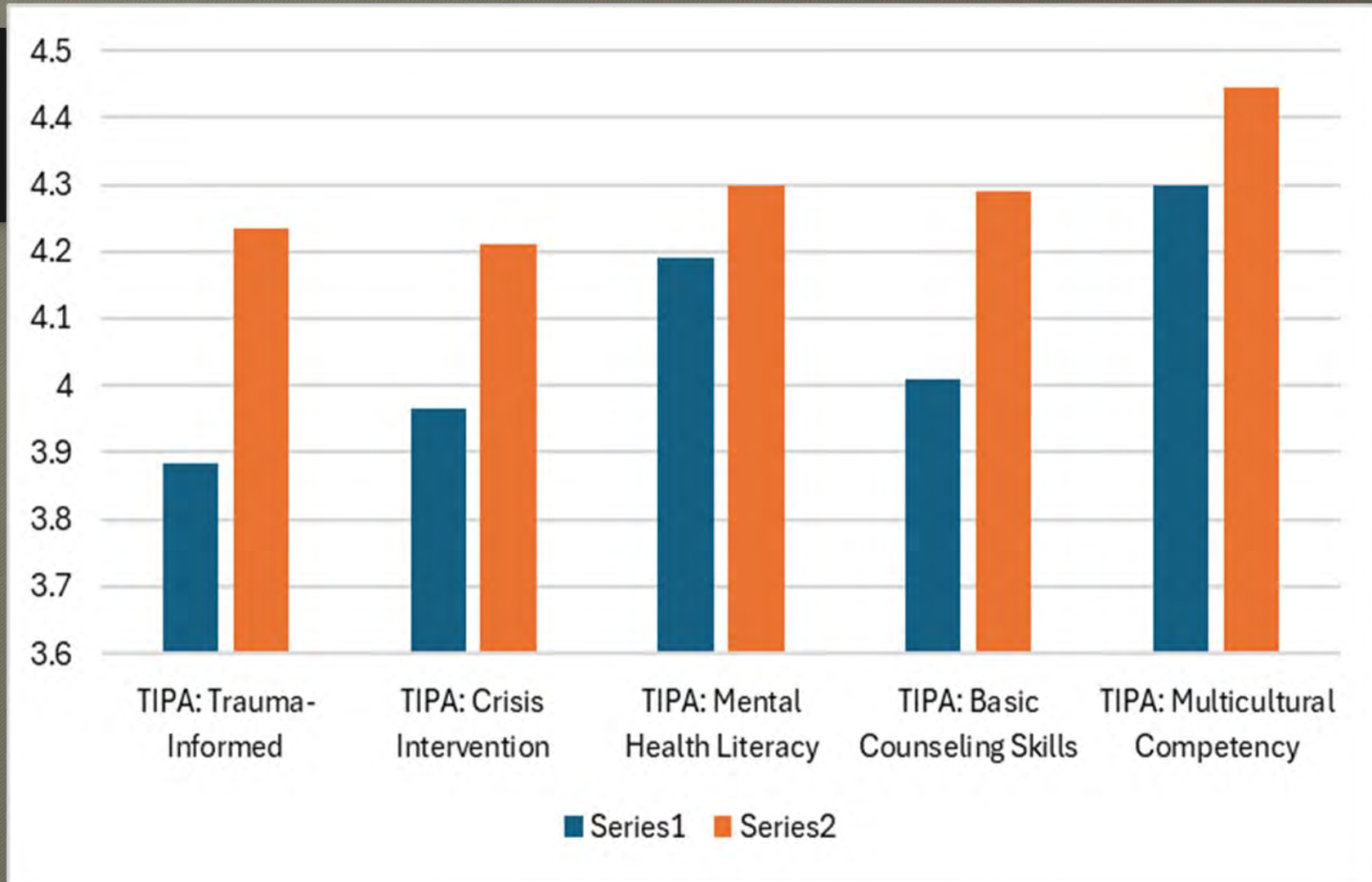
"The most impactful moment for me was **talking about suicide and how someone could prevent it.** I feel like most symptoms or signs that give that away most people don't see."

"... the part about **needing to take care of ourselves first** before we take care of others because I feel like I tend to be a people pleaser and try to focus on others more than myself."

"I feel like I kinda learned more about **my own feelings**"



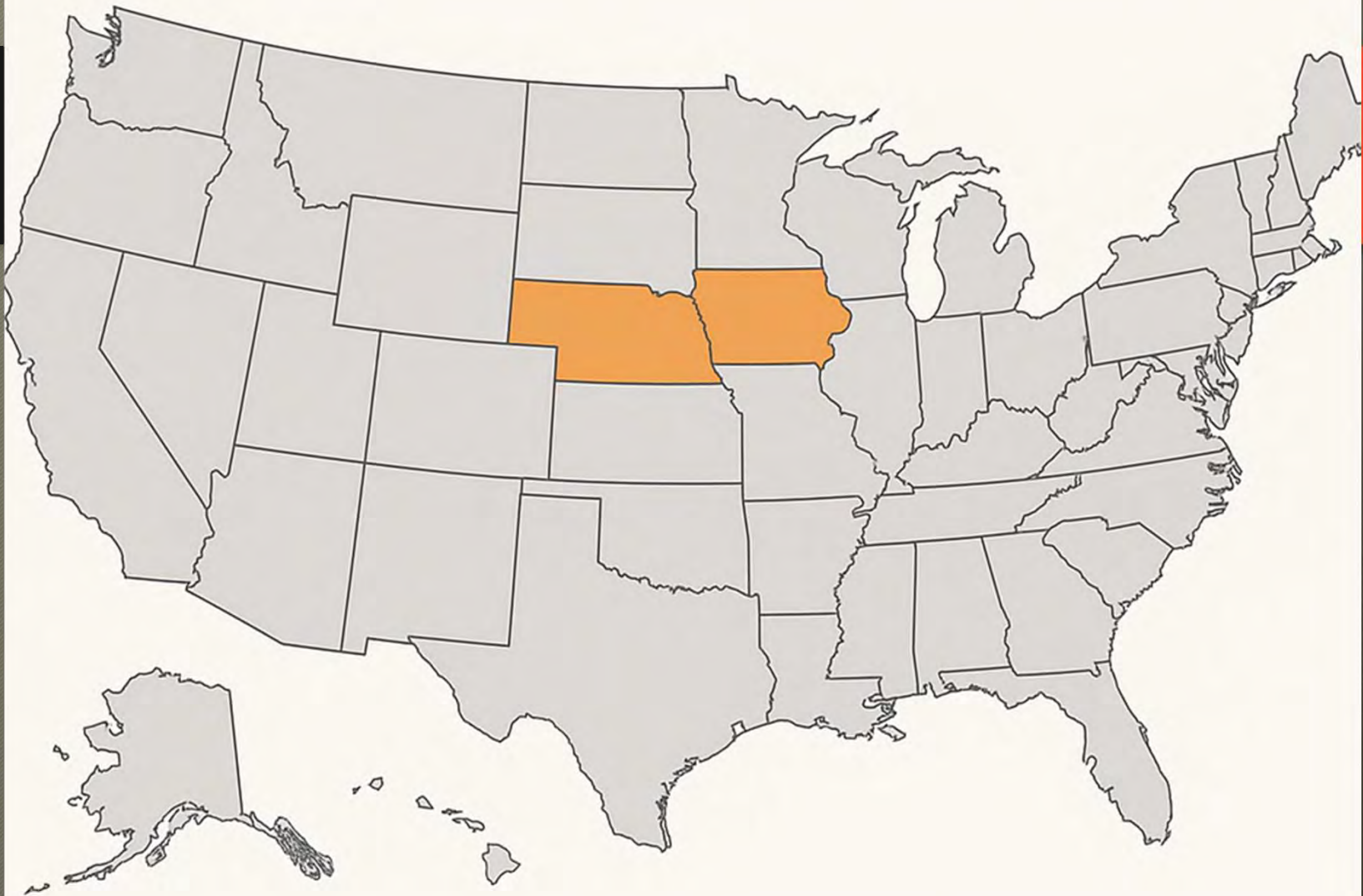




Moving Forward...

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- **Collaboration with Children's Nebraska** (Through March 2026)
 - Bryan High School (Omaha Public Schools)
 - Ralston High School (Ralston Public Schools)
 - Bellevue West High School (Bellevue Public Schools)
- **Spencer Foundation Grant** (February 2026)
- **Secret Agents of Kindness and Empowerment** (SAKE)
- **Program Sustainability**
 - \$\$\$
 - Consultants
 - Materials and content/curriculum
 - Research/program assessment and improvement goals
 - Long-term financial plans/goals, interest, scale



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Thank You!!!