

**TITLE:** (You Are) Dam Worth It: Using the Influential Platform of Athletics to Promote Mental Health

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**STUDENT SUBMISSION:** Yes

**TOPIC/TARGET AUDIENCE:** Topic: Suicide Prevention, Stigma Reduction

Target Audiences: Program developers and evaluators, Researchers

**ABSTRACT:** Suicide rates are on the rise and mental health stigma is still a barrier to help-seeking and positive mental health. The aim of this project was to utilize the influential platform of athletics to open up the conversation around mental health in collegiate athletes, work to end the stigma, and provide resource awareness and coping skills. The initiative utilizes three pillars: education, resource awareness, and stigma reduction. Multiple Oregon State University athletics games have been utilized as a platform to spread the Dam Worth It message and promote mental health resources by including resource tables, Dam Worth It giveaways, and showing suicide prevention videos featuring student athletes throughout the games. Dam Worth It is still new in its inception, but it has gained national attention, being featured in local media, NCAA Champion Magazine, Sports Illustrated, and USA Today. We plan to utilize National College Health Association and Healthy Minds Study data to determine if reduction in stigma and an increase in resources has been achieved through this initiative. Mental health interventions utilizing a multi-level, coordinated approach and with student athletes front and center providing the messages may be a way to reach a high-stigma population in a more engaging way.

**OBJECTIVE(S):** As a result of this presentation, audience members will be able to:

Discuss the benefits of utilizing athletics as a platform to decrease stigma and increase resource awareness.

Describe one university's process of implementing a peer-driven mental health intervention.

Identify key stakeholders that could assist in intervention implementation.

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