



# HAVEN-CONNECT TEAM:



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**Office of  
Mental Health**

- Jay Carruthers, MD, Director,
- Suicide Prevention Center of New York

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Youth Participants

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# OUTLINE

HAVEN Connect Intro	Suicide in Black Youth	Why Black Church?
Faith based component	CONNECT	Church Engagement
Progress to Date	Next Steps	

# HAVEN-CONNECT

- HAVEN (Helping Alleviate Valley Experiences Now) – CONNECT is a comprehensive depression and suicide intervention for youth designed to be integrated in predominantly Black churches
- HAVEN combines
  - Church Engagement
  - Faith Based Curriculum via sermons, Bible Study and/or Sunday School
  - Suicide/Depression Intervention

# • + ○ WHY HAVEN-CONNECT? • + ○



# SUICIDE & SUICIDAL BEHAVIORS AMONG BLACK YOUTH

- Suicide is the 2<sup>nd</sup> leading cause of death for youth ages 10-19 (CDC, 2018)
- Suicide attempts rose by 73% between 1991-2017 for Black adolescents (boy and girls), while injury by attempt rose by 122% for adolescent Black boys during that time period (Lindsey, et al., 2019)
- Suicide rates for black children aged 5-12 are approximately double than that for white children of similar ages (Bridge, et al., 2015).



**Cheslie Kryst**



**Bryce Gowdy**



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**What Have We Missed in Their Stories?**



# DEVELOPMENT OF HAVEN-CONNECT

Why the Black Church?

# WHY THE BLACK CHURCH?

- **The Black church is an excellent venue for promoting positive mental health because it is one of the most influential institutions within the Black American community. (Eke, Wiles & Gaiter, 2010).**
- **Eighty-seven percent of Black Americans are affiliated with a church, and over 60% of Black youth attend church regularly (Pew Research Center, 2009).**

# WHY THE BLACK CHURCH?

- While there has been a decline in church membership across racial/ethnic groups, this decline has been significantly slower in the Black churches, with Black churches having an 81% retention rate.(Pew Research Center, 2021)
- Most Blacks
  - attend church in predominantly Black congregations
  - are more likely to believe in God
  - attend religious services
  - say religion is very important in their lives (PRC, 2021)



# WHY INCLUDE FAITH COMMUNITIES IN MENTAL HEALTH INTERVENTIONS?

- Mental health issues affect people across faith traditions.
- Faith leaders and faith communities are often “first responders”, on the front-line
- Faith communities care for whole person and families.
- Faith communities interact with people in diverse settings.
- Congregations include people from diverse workplaces, including mental health professionals.
- Mental health crises are also crises of faith.



**WHY THE  
BLACK  
CHURCH?  
MATTERING!**



**YOU ARE  
IMPORTANT**

# UNIVERSAL PREVENTIONS



**BRICC COALITION**  
*Building Resilience in Campus Community*



## PRIMARY PREVENTION

The BRICC Coalition Model increases resilience early, so students are prepared **BEFORE** they cross.

UPSTREAM PREVENTION

TERTIARY PREVENTION

# HAVEN CONNECT



HAVEN:  
CHURCH ENGAGEMENT

HAVEN:  
FAITH BASED  
CURRICULUM

HAVEN:  
YOUTH  
CONNECT



# FAITH BASED COMPONENTS

HAVEN-CONNECT

# FAITH BASED CURRICULUM

- Educational overview for pastors, youth leaders on
  - Mental health education
  - Risk & protective factors for suicide
  - Cores from Youth-Connect
    - Kinship
    - Guidance
    - Purpose
    - Balance
- How to integrate mental health knowledge, risk & protective factors for suicide and Connect Core into
  - Sermons
  - Bible Study lessons
  - Sunday school lessons
  - Youth programs



Impact of COVID-19 On Mental Health

Photo: Sherry Davis Molock  
May 19, 2022



What Does the Bible Say About  
Suicide & Mental Illness?

National Black Church Conference  
June 18, 2015

*Sherry Davis Molock, Ph.D., M.Div.  
George Washington University*

# Educational Opportunities:

# SERMONS



**“What We Fail to Notice”  
Psalm 91**



**“Notes From a Second Sight”  
2Kings 6:11-17**

# HAVEN CONNECT



HAVEN:  
CHURCH ENGAGEMENT

HAVEN:  
FAITH BASED  
CURRICULUM

HAVEN:  
YOUTH  
CONNECT



# YOUTH-CONNECT



# WHY YOUTH-CONNECT?

- Adapted from Sources of Strength, is a universal best practices youth suicide prevention program, which uses a strength-based approach to:
  - increases social bonds,
  - school engagement,
  - reduces maladaptive coping, and
  - increases referral of suicidal teens to adults for help
- Connect:
  - Been successfully used in USAF
  - USAF similarities to faith communities
    - Relatively closed systems
    - Influence of peer norms & working with trusted adults

# YOUTH-CONNECT

- Youth-Connect training focuses on strengthening skills to grow and sustain four **CORES** or protective factors:
  - **Kinship** (healthy bonds);
  - **Guidance** (support from mentors; access to medical and mental health expertise);
  - **Purpose** (goals, values, sense of belonging);
  - **Balance** (self-care and support)



# YOUTH CONNECT

- Youth participate in three 90-minute, highly engaging, interactive modules that have specific learning objectives and activities that include
  - eliciting personal goals and reasons for engaging in the existing community group;
  - introducing Four Cores as protective factors that promote resilience
  - Discussing ways to balance and strengthen each Core
  - extending learning into natural environment by inviting groups to work together to strengthen CORES between sessions
- Exploring use of post-training informational and motivational texts

# IMPLEMENTATION OF HAVEN-CONNECT



- Small group leaders recruited from churches receive total of 10.5 hours of training to help them run small break out groups
- Interested adults have a 2-hour mini version of youth training
- Pastors do one sermon on either mental health issues and/or sermon focusing on CORES
- Churches can opt to do Bible Study or Sunday school using HAVEN-CONNECT concepts
- Key informant interviews of experience of participating in HAVEN-CONNECT

# + CHURCH ENGAGEMENT +



# LOTS OF MEETINGS

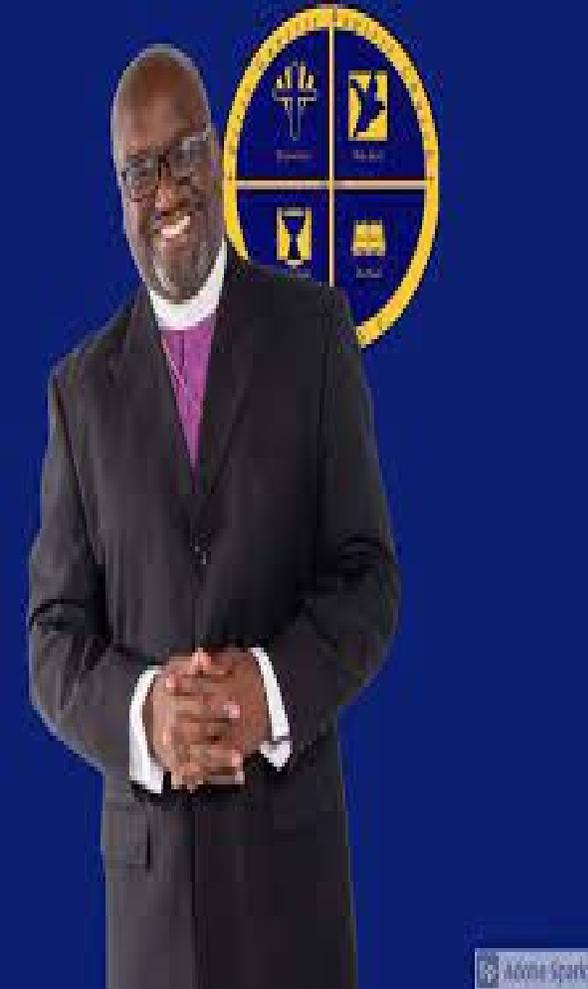


- Sojourners connect us to local church and/or consortium of churches
- Church expresses interest
- Set up schedule for trainings of youth facilitators & implementation, follow up Scheduling Faith Based Curriculum
  - Scheduling Sermon
  - Other educational components
- Follow up key informant interviews





**COMMUNITY PARTNERS: NYC  
FIRST CORINTHIAN BAPTIST CHURCH  
REV. MICHAEL WALROND, JR. PASTOR  
DR. LENA GREEN, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF HOPE CENTER**



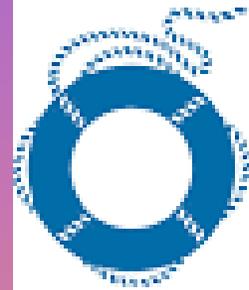
**COMMUNITY PARTNERS: ROCHESTER  
FIRST GENESIS MISSIONARY BAPTIST CHURCH  
REV. FREDERICK JOHNSON, SR., PASTOR**



**COMMUNITY PARTNERS: ALBANY  
MACEDONIA BAPTIST CHURCH  
REV. MICHAEL POINDEXTER, PASTOR**

# NEXT STEPS

- Continue to implement and refine HAVEN-CONNECT
- Funded to expand HAVEN-CONNECT to 12 churches in NY State



American Foundation  
*for* Suicide Prevention



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# THANK YOU!!

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**Questions?**