

## A Trauma-Informed Approach for Positive Youth Development for Montana Students

Tuesday 3 August 2021 - Parallel Session 2 - 12.45pm to 1.45pm (GMT+1)

**SINCLAIR - Building Enduring Partnerships**

**Lauren Davis** (*Montana State University, USA*), **Alexandra Aylward, Rebecca Buchanan** (*Emory & Henry College, USA*)

A longitudinal study from 2010-2014 indicated that 39.1% of Montana adolescents aged 12-17 sought treatment for a major depressive episode at some point during the study. Higher-than-national-average prevalence of mental illness likely contributes to Montana's suicide rate that is nearly double that of the U.S.; for example, the rate of youth suicides (ages 11-17) in Montana is more than double the rate of youth suicides nationally, and 74% of those suicides presented with warning signs. Other factors including scarcity of treatment resources, long distances to existing care, and stigma of mental illness and its care are also likely contributors. This project will directly address several factors in youth mental health through the promotion of healthy stress management and targeted improvement of indicators of depression and anxiety. This research aims to improve chronic stress-related behavioral/mental health outcomes for adolescents in rural Montana through the application of a school-based intervention of trauma-informed yoga exercises. Given the prevalence of suicide and mental health issues in rural Montana, this project is designed to help mitigate the impact of contributing factors by providing coping strategies for adolescents by bringing together multiple community agencies. These coping strategies are intended to improve overall mental health and behavioral outcomes, which may ultimately lead to reduced suicide rates. This study seeks to evaluate the implementation and efficacy of an innovative intervention that will ultimately promote positive development in school-aged children concurrently with providing rural access to novel interventions that are community-focused.