

BECOME A HOPE FOR TOMORROW CHAMPION

“Suicide is the third leading cause of death among young people age 15-24.”

What is Hope for Tomorrow?

Hope for Tomorrow (HFT) is a school-based mental health education program that provides an opportunity for adolescents who suffer from undiagnosed, under-treated, or untreated mental illness to learn both when and how to seek appropriate help. It also provides teachers, parents and the community with information on signs and symptoms of three potential, life-threatening illnesses.

What is the biggest challenge *Hope for Tomorrow* faces?

The biggest challenge this program faces is how to keep it going in the schools. *Hope for Tomorrow* has primarily been implemented by a school’s PTA board – but once those board members are gone, the program disappears.

How can you help?

We feel one effective way of keeping *Hope for Tomorrow* active in the schools is to identify HFT “champions” who will adopt a school and work with the school’s PTA, counselors, or other interested parties to keep “Hope” alive from year to year. You can choose a school your children attend or attended, or the school you live closest to, or any school you feel a connection to.

“I’m busy. How much time is this going to take?”

You can put as little or as much time into being an HFT champion as you want. You can even pair up with another person and become co-champions. Basically, your job would be to make contact with the school (the PTA president or Health Commissioner is a good place to start), see if they know about *Hope for Tomorrow* and are currently running it in their school, and if not, provide them with information about the program and encourage them to implement it. Then you would touch base with the school yearly to ensure they continue the program. You would also keep NAMI informed of your efforts.

***Hope for Tomorrow* – a “gateway” to NAMI**

Ultimately, we would like to see *Hope for Tomorrow* become a “gateway” program that leads people to other NAMI programs and resources. For example, through *Hope for Tomorrow* a student could learn about our Progression class for adolescents and young adults. A parent could learn about Basics, Family-to-Family, or Family Support Groups. School counselors could learn about Family Resource Facilitators. ESL students and parents could learn about *Conexión* and *Familia a Familia*.

The *Hope for Tomorrow* Menu of Options

What we want people to understand is that implementing *Hope for Tomorrow* in their school does not have to be a big, complicated process. It can be as simple as asking the school to put a link to NAMI or *Hope for Tomorrow* on their school website. If that’s all a school can do, that’s wonderful! Or it can be as involved as arranging a Parents and Teachers as Allies panel presentation for a teacher in-service or a parent forum. The important thing is just getting the program out there and increasing awareness.