



Youth Aware of Mental Health

Montana State University (MSU) Extension

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MSU Center for Research on Rural
Education



What is Youth Aware of Mental Health (YAM)?

- Universal mental health promotion program designed in Sweden
- Aims to raise mental health awareness about risk and protective factors associated with suicide
- Designed for ages 14-17
- The adolescents learn from both a trained instructor and from each other through a mix of cognitive, emotional, and experiential learning in 5 interactive sessions.

History of YAM in MT

- Brought to Montana State University in 2016
- MSU Extension began teaching YAM in 2017
- Four of the seven Trainers in the United States are from Montana
 - Jenny Gorsenger (Missoula)
 - Kathy K Shea (Helena)
 - Tom Shawl (Browning)
 - Larry Wolf (Browning)

Started with 3 pilot schools, has grown to over 30

Over 9,300 Montana students have participated in YAM since 2016!

Why Do Students Need YAM?

Montana has ranked in the top five for suicide rates in the nation (for all age groups) for the past thirty years.

In Montana from 2009-2018 the youth suicide (ages 11-17) rate was 11/100,000. This is more than double the national rate for the same age group (4.56).

Youth suicide is the number one cause of preventable death for children 10-14 In Montana.

Why Do Students Need YAM?

According In the 2021 Youth Behavior Risk Survey:

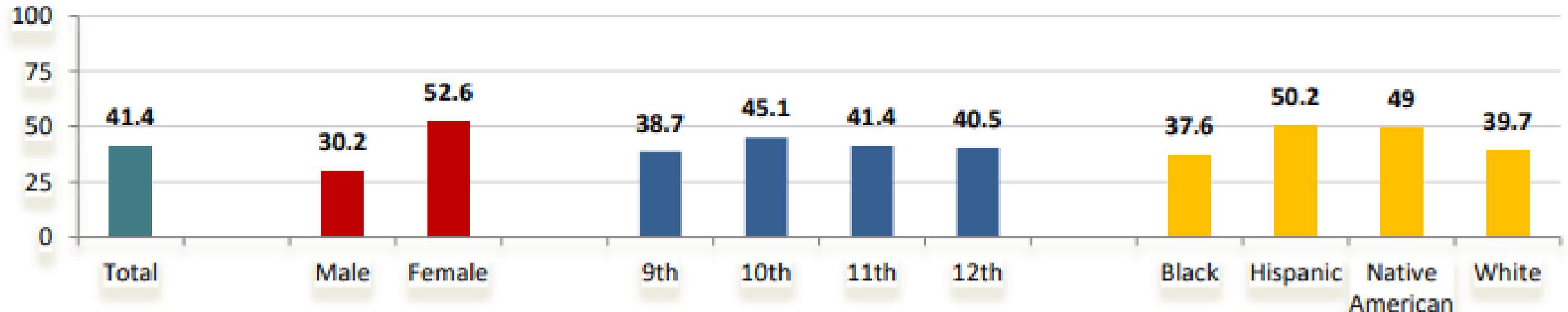
Over 41% of high school students reported feelings of sadness or hopelessness for two or more weeks in a row (the highest ever recorded).

In the 30 days before the survey, 32% of students reported that their mental health was not good most of the time or always. Females (41%) were more likely than males (22%) to experience poor mental health, including stress, anxiety and depression.

Among suicide ideation questions, 22% of students considered suicide, 18% made a plan, and 10% attempted suicide. Among students who attempted suicide, 32% had an attempt that required medical treatment.

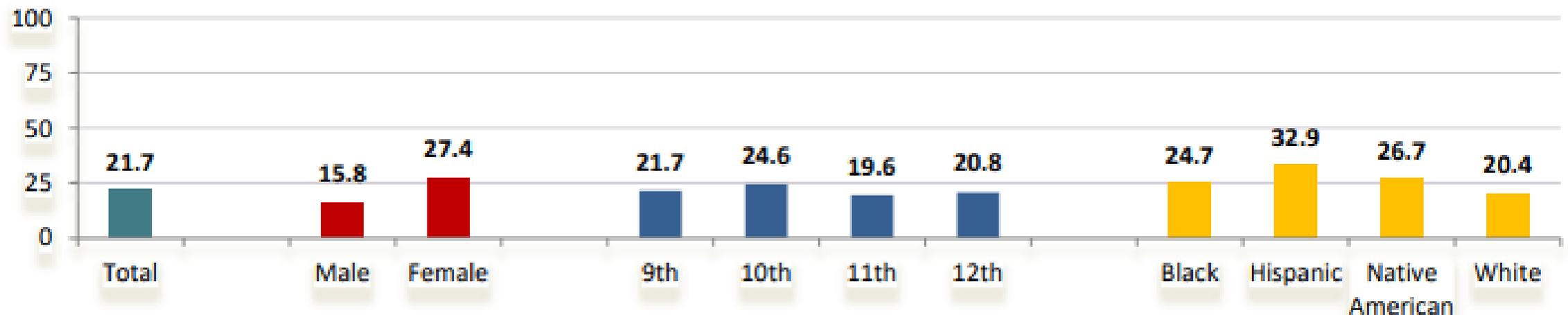
FELT SAD OR HOPELESS

During the past 12 months, 41.4 percent of students felt so sad or hopeless almost every day for two weeks or more in a row that they stopped doing some usual activities.



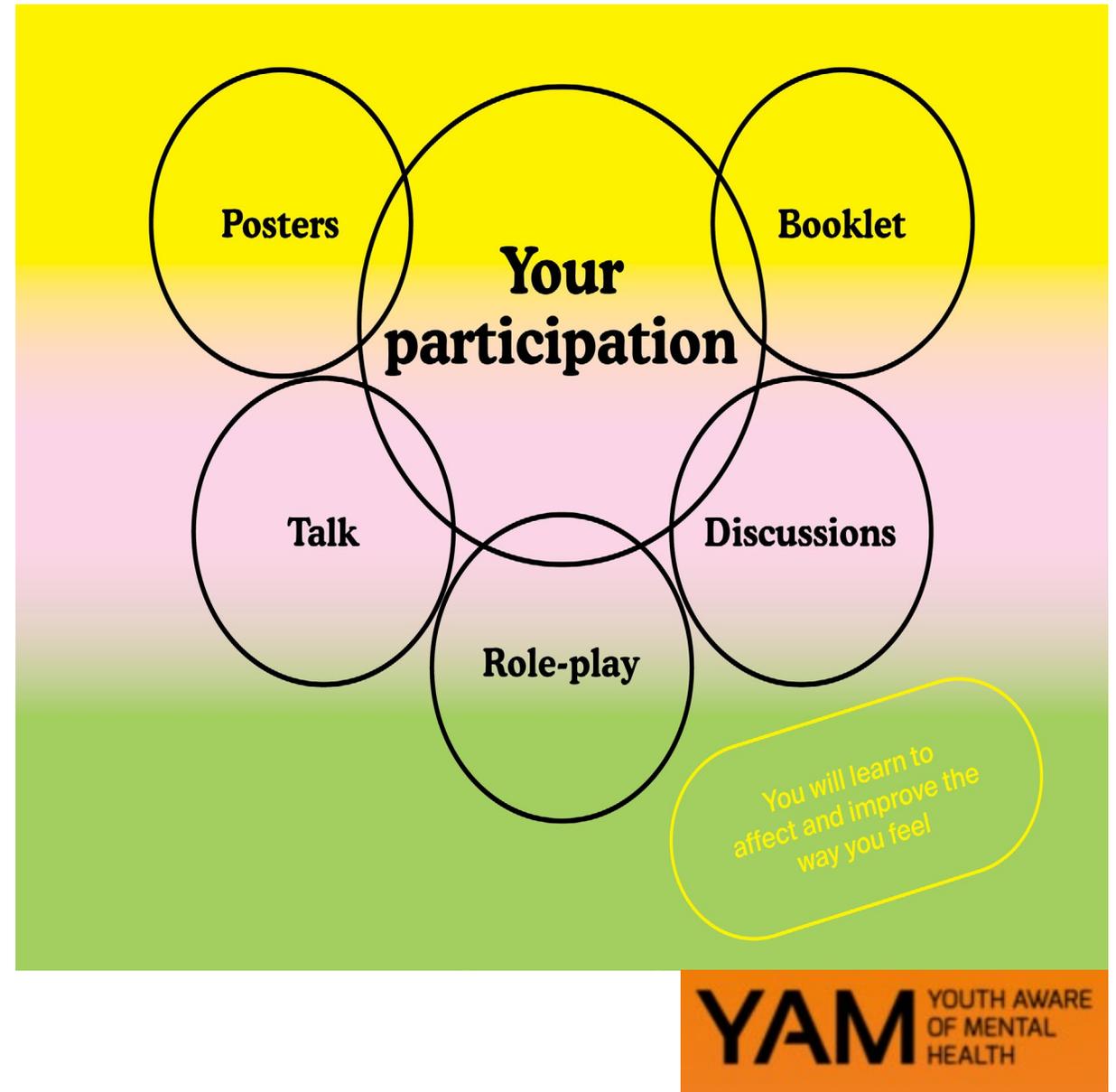
SERIOUSLY CONSIDERED SUICIDE

During the past 12 months, 23.4 percent of students seriously considered attempting suicide.



YAM brings different learning methods together with the fundamental components of the program. Which includes:

1. Discussion on mental health
2. Role-playing
3. Informational booklet with local, state, and national resources
4. Posters for display in the classroom.
5. Student Participation



YAM Program Session Goals

Opening Session: Mental Health Discussion	Breaking down the stigma surrounding mental health. Students learn about depression, anxiety, stress and crisis.
Dilemma Exercise: Decision-Making	Focusing on decision-making and identifying feelings. Topics include substance abuse, peer pressure, school stress, social media and relationship problems.
Role Play: Stress and Crisis	Identifying stressful situations. Youth act out stressful situations and outcomes in a fun and nonthreatening manner.
Role Play: Depression and Suicide	Identifying signs of depression and suicide. Youth role play difficult situations and may practice getting help from adults in safe manner.
Closing Session: Helping yourself and a friend	Summing up the material and examining local, state, and national resources.

Session 1: Mental Health Knowledge

- Discuss mental health with YAM power point
- Breaking down the stigma surrounding mental health, by asking, “What is mental health?”
- Like physical health, everyone has mental health too
- Learn about:
 - Depression and Anxiety
 - Stress and Crisis
 - Coping skills
 - Helping a friend

What is Mental Health?

No one in the world is free from problems



YAM YOUTH AWARE
OF MENTAL
HEALTH

Mental health is how you think, feel, and act in everyday life.

Your mental health is just as important as your physical health.

Sometimes life can feel like an emotional rollercoaster.

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HEALTH

Session 2: Dilemma Exercise

- Decision-making with dilemma cards
- What would you do if in this dilemma?
- Slow down to stop and think about what you are feeling
- How and what you are feeling shapes how you respond
- Avoid shaming for “bad” decisions
- Do acknowledge some decisions are healthier than others

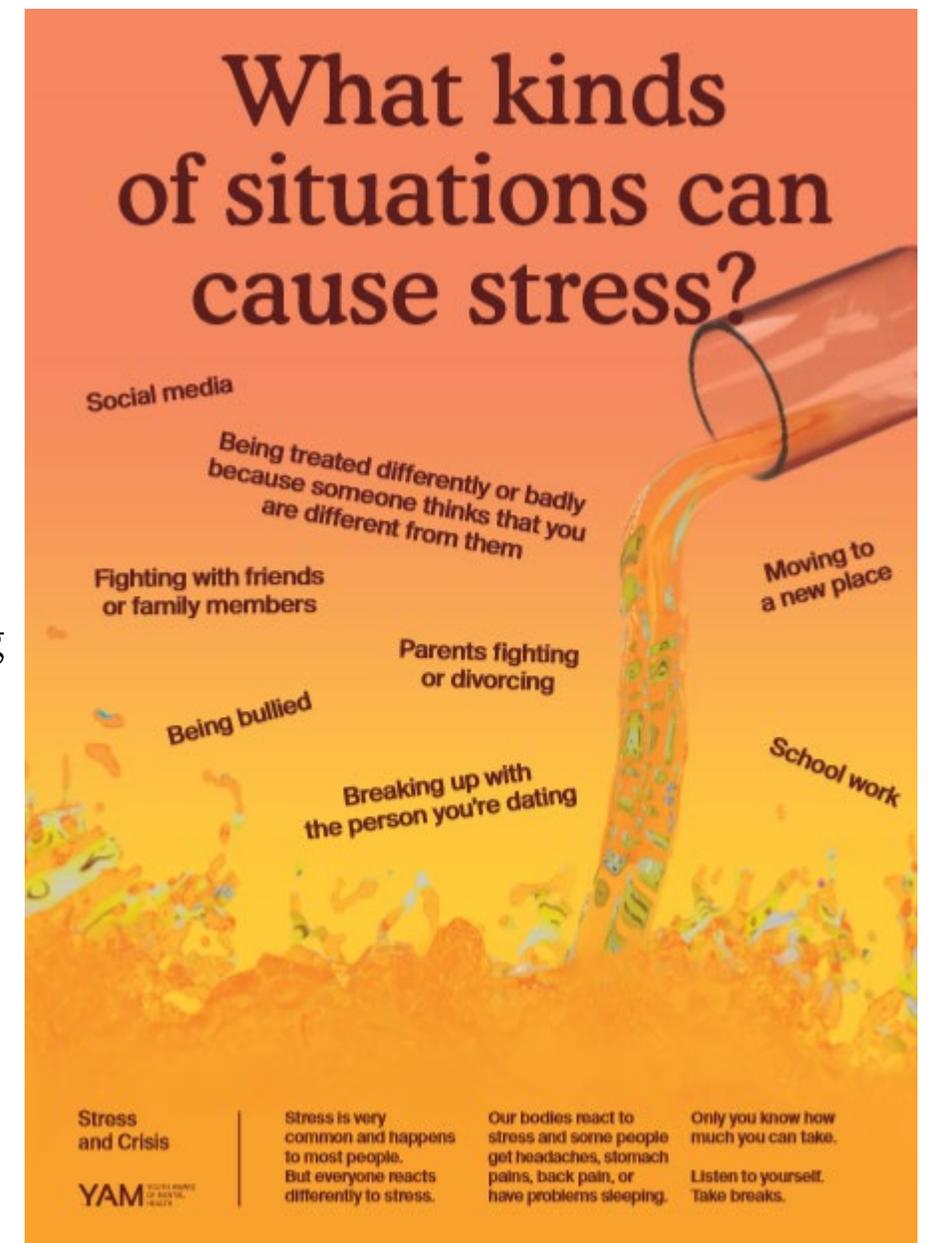
▼
**THIS IS HOW
YOU FEEL**

▼
**THIS IS WHAT
YOU DO**

▼
**WHAT COULD
HAPPEN NEXT?**

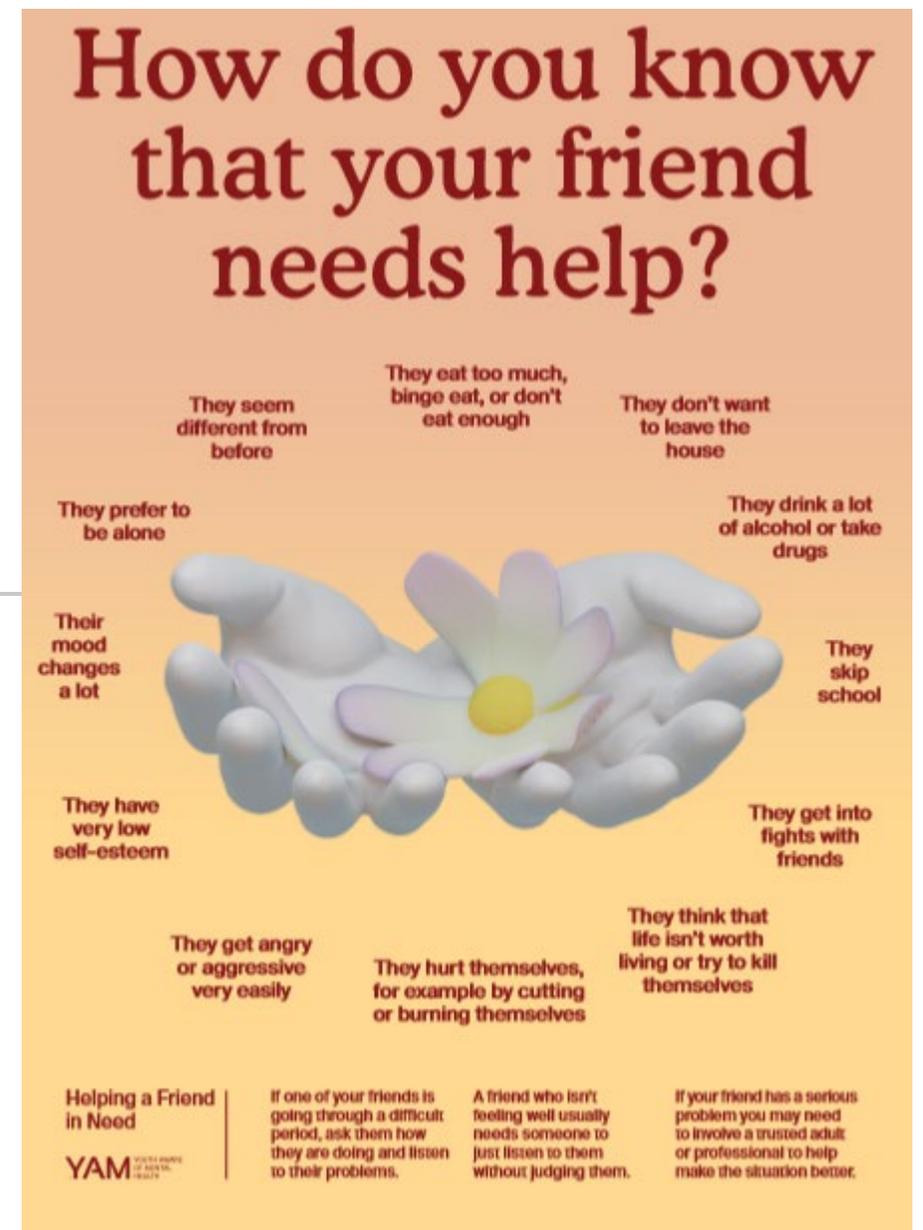
Session 3: Role Plays Stress and Crisis

- Students generate what is stressful to them
- Essentially creating their own dilemma's and then acting them out in a fun and nonthreatening way
- Youth get to practice experiencing stressful situations and how to cope with them
- Every student gets to participate at their own level of comfort
- Instructors guide students through the role-plays and ask questions to get the students to think again about:
 - Feelings, thoughts, and possible outcomes



Session 4: Role Plays Depression and Suicide

- Students get to role play situations in which a friend or peer may be depressed
- Youth get to practice experiencing stressful (or even crisis) situations and how to cope with them
- Every student gets to participate at their own level of comfort
- Instructors guide students through the role-plays and ask questions to get the students to think again about:
 - Feelings, thoughts, and outcomes
 - How and when to get help from adult
 - What to do if the first adult doesn't help you



Session 5: Closing Session

- Instructors summarize, revisit, or use this session to wrap up main points or any topic they feel needs closure
- May take this time to answer any questions that arose during previous sessions
- Each closing session looks different
- Emphasis is placed on local, state, and national resources
- May practice calling and texting national hotlines
- Urge students to seek help for themselves or others

Who can I ask for advice?

Your problems can be very real and painful. Take your feelings seriously and ask for help. You can contact the healthcare services and organizations close to you listed here.



YAM

If you do not get the help you need from the contacts listed here, speak with an adult you know and trust - but don't give up!

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Research on YAM

[Saving and Empowering Youth Lives in Europe \(SEYLE\)](#)

- A multicenter, cluster-randomized controlled trial that studied YAM and two other interventions.
- The SEYLE sample consisted of 11,110 adolescent pupils, median age 15 years (IQR 14-15), recruited from 168 schools in ten European Union countries.
- At the 12-month follow-up, YAM was associated with a significant reduction of incidents suicide attempts and severe suicidal ideation compared with the control group.



Research on YAM at MSU

We have not secured a RCT on YAM in Montana

We have not been able to ask directly about suicide ideation or attempts

We have asked about risk and protective factors: found to increase mental health knowledge (Lindlow et al., 2020)

Found YAM to be sustainable, feasible, & acceptable! (Bailey et al, 2021)

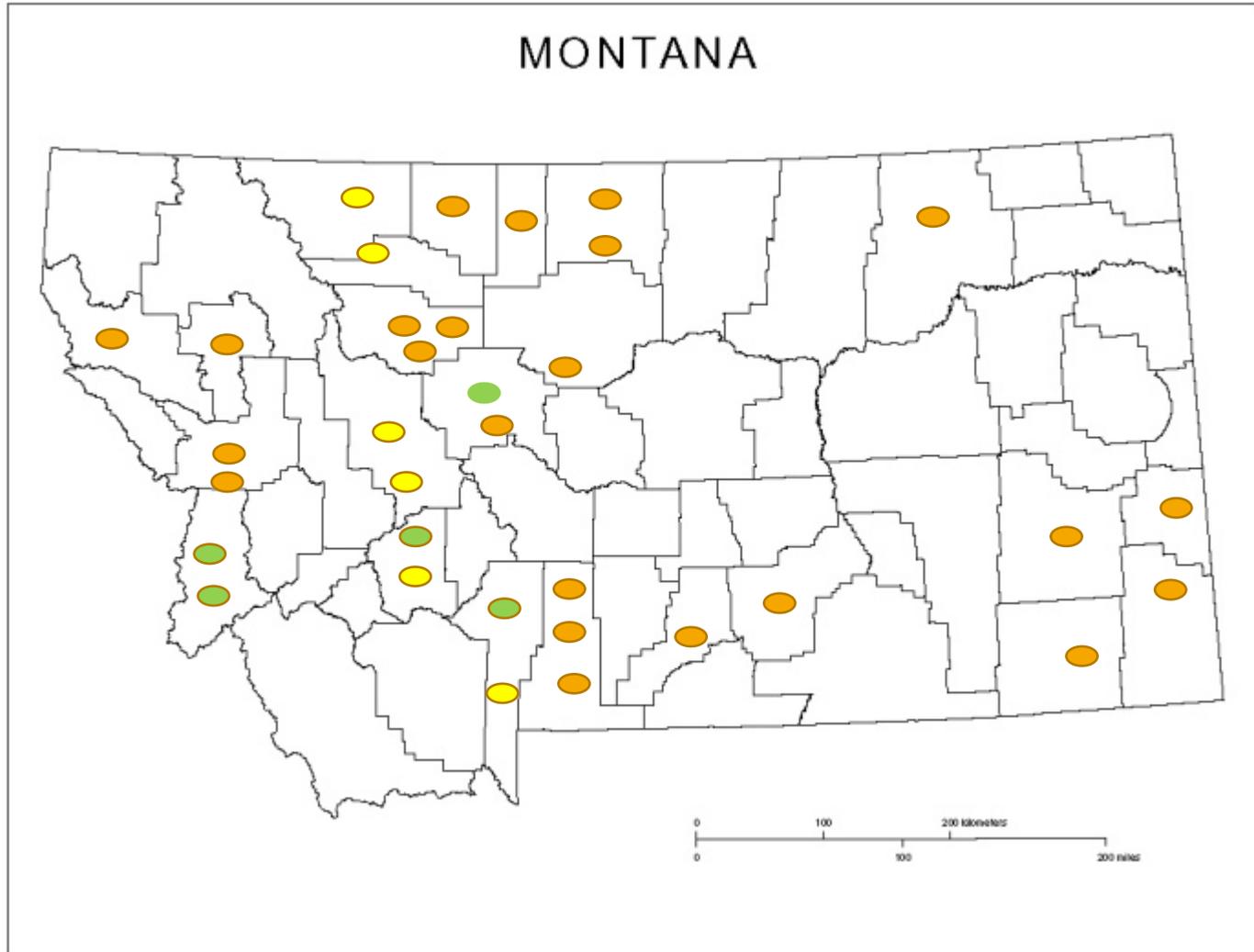
Over 88% of youth surveyed said their school should teach mental health



Limitations of YAM

- We currently do not have an Instructor in every county, and in rural areas, Extension Agents have many programs that they are delivering to their community and cannot focus just on YAM
- YAM can be expensive upfront, (\$2,300 for training) and is \$12 a book
- YAM must be taught over the course of three weeks, typically in five separate sessions. It can be difficult to arrange with school schedules

YAM in Montana



- Taught by MSU CRRE
- Taught by MSU Extension
- Taught by School Personnel

All dots indicate schools where YAM has or will be taught at since 2016.

Over 9,300 Montana students have participated in YAM since 2016!

Center for Research on Rural Education-YAM

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Center for Research on Rural Education website:

<https://www.montana.edu/crre/youthawareofmentalhealth.html>



<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1fYuePrJGHebp-ccuVlxpIGkYCQZNvX4J/view?usp=sharing>

Brenda Richey-Montana Extension Agent on Flathead Reservation