

Accessing Rural Populations for Nursing Research: Challenges and Lessons Learned

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SINNISSIPPI CENTERS
Providing care, offering hope

Introduction

- Approximately 17% of the population of the United States lives in rural areas
- Those who reside in rural areas tend to have poorer health and less access to health care resources than those living in urban areas.
- Conducting nursing research in rural areas can be challenging
- This task can be especially challenging when it involves researching a sensitive topic such as adolescent suicide

2014 National Healthcare Quality and Disparities Report chartbook on rural health care. Rockville, MD: Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality; August 2015. AHRQ Pub. No. 15-0007-9-EF. U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality

Context of Current Study

- Delphi study of rural mental health practitioners to determine what issues are most important to parents whose child has made a non-lethal suicide attempt
- Web based two step survey

Aim

To describe experiences while recruiting participants for research related to adolescent suicide focused on rural populations

Steps in Accessing Our Rural Population for Research

Sent emails to 8 rural county health department administrators describing research study and asked to refer us to agencies who provide mental health services to adolescents and families.
Four responded

- **Finding mental health resources in rural counties**
- **Previous relationship with local health department staff**

Followed up with telephone calls and messages
Made contact with one more health department
Four health departments referred us to Sinnissippi Centers-serves surrounding 4 rural counties

- **Finding right contact person to communicate with**
- **Centrally located family mental health resources for surrounding 4 rural counties**

Made contact with director of child and adolescent services to describe research
Made appointment to meet with director and two lead staff to give more detail on methodology and aim of this research

- **Far distance from university**
- **Agency not familiar with research method**
- **Very caring staff who want to help their clients**

Worked with director to receive IRB approval from agency

- **Lack of trusting working relationship with university**
- **Small numbers of staff**
- **Staff see value in this research and possible positive implications for their practice**

Made appointment to attend all staff meeting to announce research study and answer questions
First link sent to research survey sent to staff

Facilitators

- Previous relationship with local health department staff
- Centrally located family mental health resources for surrounding 4 rural counties
- Very caring staff who want to help their clients
- Staff see value in this research and possible positive implications for their practice

Barriers

- Finding mental health resources in rural counties
- Finding right contact person to communicate with
- Far distance from university
- Agency not familiar with research method
- Lack of trusting working relationship with university
- Small numbers of staff

Lessons Learned-Reduce Barriers

- Make personal contact early in process
- Make effort to travel to rural areas for meeting
- Educate providers on research methodology
- Keep communication lines open throughout and after research is completed
- Partner with site for dissemination and future research

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