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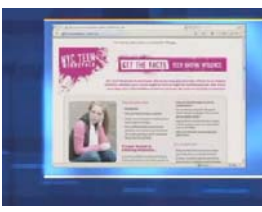
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Department Of Health Page On MySpace Nets More Than 11,000 Hits

DIAL UP BROAD BAND

July 13, 2008

Poster campaigns don't seem work well these days, so the city's Department of Health is turning to the social networking site MySpace to reach out to troubled teens. NY1's Cheryl Wills filed the following report.

Officials with the Department of Health say nearly one-third of city high school students admit they experience sadness that keeps them from daily activities and eight percent report attempting suicide.

So the city is changing with the times and trying to reach troubled teens on MySpace.

Dr. Myla Harrison is the assistant commissioner for Child and Adolescent Services

"NYC Teen Mindspace is a catchy way to let people know that this is about mental health issues, depression, substance abuse, dating violence and really serious issues," said Dr. Harrison.


But why MySpace?

The DOH says poster campaigns just don't seem

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to work anymore and some 93 percent of all teens use the internet and almost all of them visit social networking sites.

The DOH MySpace page features teen characters who use video blogs to share stories about drug use and depression.

Teens who spoke with NY1 had mixed reaction to the idea.

"It is a good idea because some people can find it easy to talk to friends or parents about problems, but boys especially find it harder so logging onto MySpace is a lot easier to just type in your problems and send away," said high school student Will Harwood.

"I guess it would be more personal than calling a hotline, but I don't know if I would go for it," said high school student Lewis Noble.

"I think it's cool because people can talk about their problems because sometimes here in New York, it's a big city, very busy, so people don't talk so that would be a great way to talk," said high school student Carrolina Correa da Silva.

The MySpace campaign seems to be working. It launched less than a week ago and received more than 11,000 hits in its first few days.

Health officials say they're targeting teenaged boys in particular who are often reluctant to seek help.

"Boys are different than girls in terms of reaching out for help and yet we do know lots of boys have problems," said Dr. Harrison. "I think for boys it's less of a social issue than girls and they may get help if they don't have to tell somebody they're getting help."

The MySpace site also features polls, music downloads and fact sheets.

Perhaps most importantly, they can connect to 1-800-LifeNet, where counselors are available around the clock.

The MySpace page can be found at myspace.com/nycteen_mindspace.

- Cheryl Wills

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