



NEWS RELEASE

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Who's Got Game? Texas
Texas Adopts Training Using Gaming Technology to Identify
and Assist Students At-Risk for Suicide

*Over 100,000 high school teachers and administrators in Texas will soon be eligible to participate in an innovative online suicide prevention training simulation designed to prepare them to identify and assist students in mental distress. The simulation is an adaptation of At-Risk, a training course originally developed for university faculty. Based on educational gaming technology, **At-Risk** has been shown to dramatically increase the willingness and skill of university faculty members to identify and refer to counseling students exhibiting signs of mental distress, such as depression, anxiety, and thoughts of suicide. **At-Risk** is the first online training simulation to be included in the national Best Practices registry of the Suicide Prevention Resource Center.*

AUSTIN, TX. June 8, 2010 — More than 400 health and mental health professionals, suicide prevention experts, volunteers and those who have lost a loved one to suicide will attend the "Coming Together to Care: Suicide Prevention Symposium," co-sponsored by the Texas Department of State Health Services, Mental Health America of Texas and the Texas Suicide Prevention Council on June 9-10, 2010 at the Marriott Austin North Hotel Austin to learn more about the new innovative online suicide prevention training simulation to prepare them to identify and assist students who are exhibiting signs of mental distress. The existing training simulation is already in use by university faculty nationwide according to Kognito Interactive, the New York-based learning technology company that developed the original simulation.

Kognito will work with Mental Health America of Texas (MHAT) and other mental health experts to tailor its popular At-Risk suicide prevention training simulation to the needs of Texas students and educators. Texas accounts for approximately 10 percent of youth suicides nationwide. Suicide is the third leading cause of death among the 15-19 age group. The simulation will be available for use by Texas educators in August of this year.

"The statewide roll-out of At-Risk for high school educators puts Texas in the forefront of supporting its students, families, and teachers," said Mary Ellen Nudd, Vice President of MHAT. "With this innovative training tool we hope to enlist all of our high school teachers in early intervention and prevention for students whose mental distress might otherwise go undetected."

On the first day of the conference Mary Ellen Nudd and Ron Goldman of Kognito Interactive will present *Using Educational Gaming Technology to Prepare High School Teachers in Texas to Identify and Refer Students At-Risk for Suicide* at 3 p.m. in the hotel ballroom.



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The Texas initiative builds on the success of Kognito's original *At-Risk* gatekeeper training program which is currently in use at 30 universities. *At-Risk* is the first simulation-based training program to be added to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's (SAMHSA) Suicide Prevention Resource Center (SPRC) Best Practices Registry. A recent study among 72 universities has shown that the *At-Risk* training significantly increased faculty members' motivation and ability to identify approach and refer students in mental distress. A report about the study can be downloaded at www.kognito.com/atrisk/research.html.

Benefits of *At-Risk* for Texas High School Educators

At-Risk is a turnkey online training environment that will be hosted and maintained by Kognito. Anticipated benefits of *At-Risk* for High School Educators include:

- Reduction of the number of undetected high school students who are experiencing mental distress including depression and thoughts of suicide, and providing avenues of help for these students;
- Rapidly and cost-effectively training teachers and administrators with an engaging online course;
- Reducing teachers and administrators anxiety about approaching and dealing with at-risk students and their parents;
- Tracking who has completed the training for compliance and legal purposes.

Educational Strategy Based on Gaming

In the new *At-Risk* High School training, users take on the role of a virtual high school teacher who will first analyze the profiles of their virtual students (e.g., their behavior, classwork and appearance) in order to identify the students who are exhibiting symptoms of mental distress. The virtual teacher then engages in simulated practice conversations with the students to determine whether and how to refer them. The virtual students are fully animated and possess their own emotional state and memory. A demo of the university version of the program can be viewed at www.kognito.com/atrisk. The training is completed once the user successfully identifies and effectively refers the correct students.

About MHA Texas

Mental Health America of Texas is a nonprofit education and advocacy organization to promote mental health; prevent mental illnesses through education and research; and improve care and treatment for persons with mental illnesses

About Kognito

Kognito is a developer of web-based, interactive training simulations and educational games that address strategic business and training challenges. Since 2003, our team of psychologists, learning experts, and game designers has been leading the way in using cutting-edge game technology and empirical research in social behavior to produce evidence-based training experiences for Fortune 500 companies, government entities, and universities. Our work has won numerous awards including the 2007 and 2008 Learning Leader Awards from Bersin & Associates. For more information visit <http://www.kognito.com>.

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