Are You Ok?
#ItIsOkToAsk

Kent State University
Bateman Blue Team
Holly Disch
Brittney Prather
Kristin Slomiany
Charleah Trombitas
Nicole Zahn

Tim Roberts, Faculty Adviser
Erin Orsini, Professional Adviser
Table of Contents

1. Executive Summary
2. Situation Analysis and Key Publics
3. Theme, Key Messages, Primary Research Highlights
5. Secondary Research Highlights, Objectives, Strategies and Tactics
8. Conclusion
A1. Budget
A2. Testimonials
A6. Recommendations
A7. Publics
A8. Communication Elements
A14. Primary Research
A32. Secondary Research
Executive Summary

Meet Kent State University student Jailyn Menefee, a vibrant young woman active in Greek life and student media. Jailyn is always surrounded by friends and family and busy with school and work. Jailyn suffers from anxiety, and depression runs in her family. Jailyn says because she is African American, talking about mental health can feel like a challenge. She is expected to be strong and resilient, but that can be difficult when it is not how she feels internally. The Kent State Bateman Blue team heard multiple stories similar to Jailyn’s, which led to the decision of sparking a change in the conversation about mental health among African-American college-aged students at Kent State and the nearby University of Akron.

Focus groups, secondary research, surveys and interviews confirmed the notion that mental health is a taboo topic throughout the African-American community. Bateman Blue also discovered college students experience high levels of emotional distress, and many are unaware of the services available to them on campus and locally.

“I feel like in a lot of black families, people don’t talk about mental [health]. Your family will say ‘go pray about it’ or ‘just go to church,’ and it is supposed to cure whatever problems you have. I know people that have been going through so much, and they can’t go to their family and talk about it because they feel they will be judged or called overdramatic.” - Jailyn Menefee

Based on research insights, Bateman Blue created the “Are You Ok?” campaign to target African-American college students at Kent State and Akron. Fueled by student suggestions, the campaign was aimed at educating students about the difference between mental health and mental illness. Our goal was more fundamental than changing the direction of the conversation; we were driven to encourage our target audience to actually discuss mental health and facilitate a lasting dialogue with the #ItIsOkToAsk hashtag.

Our campaign used the Five Signs of emotional suffering as a starting point to initiate education efforts and promote conversations among African-American students. We also informed students about ways to improve their everyday mental health, including distributing information about mental health resources available on both campuses as well as in the local communities.

We are happy to report that we reached all four of our objectives. By helping break the taboo and disseminating methods to improve mental health awareness, Bateman Blue empowered students such as Jailyn to know #ItIsOKToAsk yourself or a loved one about their everyday mental health.
Situation Analysis
The Campaign to Change Direction® stresses the importance of positive mental health conversations while addressing the lack of access to mental health services. One of the campaign’s signature initiatives are the Five Signs of emotional suffering, which are used as a guide to notice if someone is in a poor mental state. The Five Signs of emotional suffering are as follows: change in personality, agitation, withdrawal, poor self-care and hopelessness. Through conversations about mental health and the Five Signs, The Campaign to Change Direction® helps spark positive conversations and actions concerning mental health.

During primary and secondary research, the Bateman Blue team discovered African Americans are underserved and undirected when it comes to mental health resources and services. Many African Americans are uninformed on where and how to receive mental health care, and some are unable to afford the services. From the research, Bateman Blue discovered the topic of mental health is taboo within the African-American community, and the team decided to develop a campaign to not only inform African Americans about ways to improve mental health but also raise awareness about the importance of openly discussing mental health concerns.

As primary research progressed, the Bateman Blue team discovered college-aged African Americans at Kent State and Akron suffer more often from mental health issues compared with students of other races, primarily due to racial tension. Many of those students are counseled by family and friends to find alternatives, such as spirituality, rather than seek professional help or other support. The term “mental health” is incorrectly associated with mental illness in the African-American community, causing many of those suffering to remain quiet. Additionally, a lack of knowledge and information about available counseling or psychological services leave African-American students feeling as if they have nowhere to turn.

These research findings affirmed Bateman Blue’s decision to target college-aged, African-American students at Kent State and Akron.

Key Publics
Primary Public: Research findings led Bateman Blue to target African-American college students as the key public. After conducting intercept interviews, surveys and focus groups, Bateman Blue found mental health is often not discussed within African-American communities. Many African-American students fear speaking about their mental health because those issues are often seen as something that can be resolved without assistance.

Secondary Public: Bateman Blue chose college-aged students from both Kent State and the Akron as a secondary public. From primary research, the team found college students experience higher rates of anxiety and depression due to academic stress, and many are unaware of mental health services available to them on campus or in the surrounding community.
Theme
Bateman Blue chose the theme “Are You Ok?,” emphasizing #ItIsOkToAsk if a student or loved one is experiencing one of the Five Signs of emotional suffering. The theme expresses the importance of recognizing the difference between mental health and mental illness as well as reinforces the necessity of reaching out for help when experiencing one or more of the Five Signs.

Key Messages
1. #ItIsOkToAsk yourself if your mental health is as strong as it can be. Are you experiencing one of the Five Signs of emotional suffering? What is triggering this? What can you do to better manage and improve your mental health on a daily basis?

2. #ItIsOkToAsk for help. Everyone has a “bad mental health day” on occasion, and one in five Americans suffers from a mental illness. It is OK to ask about resources available to improve your mental fitness, whether it be on campus or off campus. Help is here. You just need to ask for it.

3. #ItIsOkToAsk a family member, loved one or friend if they are struggling emotionally. Learning about maintaining good mental health and the right questions to ask can allow you to share your strength, hope and knowledge to others in need.

Primary Research Highlights
Bateman Blue conducted a pre-campaign benchmark survey of more than 300 college-aged students at universities in Ohio and four other states to determine knowledge of mental health and mental health services.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BENCHMARK SURVEY RESULTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>FELT SEPARATION</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>49.72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students have felt themselves separating from their regular social lives in the past month.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>FELT DISINTEREST</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41.75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students felt extreme disinterest in their studies in the past month.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>FELT NERVOUS</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>58.25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Those surveyed feel they need to hide their mental state from friends and family.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>FELT NEED FOR CHANGE</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>49.72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students believe a change needs to be made to the stigmas surrounding mental health.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Focus Groups: Bateman Blue conducted a total of three focus groups with Kent State students. The first focus group consisted of strictly Caucasian participants, the second was a mix of races and the third consisted of strictly African-American students.

College Students’ Key Takeaways:
• Students do not know the difference between mental health and mental illness.
• Words such as crazy, psycho and deranged are what comes to mind when mental health or mental illness is mentioned.

College-Aged, African-American Students’ Key Takeaways:
• All participants agreed that in the African-American community, mental health issues are perceived as feelings that can be “prayed” or wished away.
• All participants agreed African-American students do not want to be viewed as less than, which often holds them back from reaching out for help.
• All participants agreed a spoken-word event addressing mental health would be heavily attended and help inform African-American students about mental health and the services available to them.

During the third focus group discussion, the topic of religion came to light. We discovered in the African-American community, mental health issues are seen as something one can go to church for and “pray away.” This idea was solidified among all of those participating in the third focus group. Participants said when dealing with an issue, even if it is physical, you do not go to the doctor; instead, you go to church because religion plays a large role in the African-American community.

Intercept Interviews: Bateman Blue interviewed 125 Kent State students and 50 Akron students over a two-month span at various locations throughout the campuses.

The vast majority of students:
• Were unaware of mental health services on campus
• Did not know the difference between mental health and mental illness
• Were unaware of the Five Signs of emotional suffering

Mental Health First Aid Training:
• Before campaign implementation, all five members of the Bateman Blue team underwent eight hours of mental health “first aid” training offered by Project AWARE at Kent State. Team members learned about detecting mental health issues and local mental health resources during the training.
• The team felt it was important to undergo the training so members could serve as more effective and informed mental health advocates during the campaign.

Summit County Campaign:
Bateman Blue met with the Summit County Campaign to Change Direction February 10 and was given campaign materials to distribute during implementation. Summit County discussed successful tactics with team members.

Please visit the full primary research section starting on page A14 for further information.
Secondary Research Highlights
The Campaign to Change Direction® works to change the culture toward mental health by, in part, driving people to take a pledge to learn and recognize the Five Signs of emotional suffering. Secondary research indicated college-aged students undergo extreme stress during this time in their lives with tensions involving friends, family and school work. Research also showed African-American citizens are less likely to discuss mental health, compared with other races, and a history or misdiagnosis has helped create misperceptions toward therapy. At Kent State, 8 percent of the student body is African American, and at Akron 10.2 percent of the student body is African American. The topic of mental health is ignored and not addressed proactively within the African-American community.

Please visit our full secondary research section starting on page A32 for further information.

Objective, Strategies and Tactics
Objective 1:
Increase awareness of the differences between mental health and mental illness so 40 African-American students at Kent State University and the University of Akron can correctly articulate the difference by March 15, 2017.

Rationale: Bateman Blue’s research indicated the key public, college-aged African Americans, is unaware of the differences between mental health and mental illness. Educating members of the key public about this important concept is key to changing their perceptions and motivating them to ask about ways to better manage their mental health.

Strategy 1: Use face-to-face communication to educate African-American students about the differences between mental health and mental illness.

Tactic 1: Hosted an open discussion at the Kent State Student Multicultural Center March 13 to talk about the differences between mental health and mental illness. More than 25 African-American students expressed their views on mental health and how it is viewed in their community.

Strategy 2: Use digital communication techniques to educate students about the differences between mental health and mental illness.

Tactic 1: Used the campaign’s Twitter and Facebook accounts to post information and articles explaining the differences between mental health and mental illness, as well as sharing content suggesting ways to maintain good mental health. Both accounts were updated daily with topical links and information on mental health from February 17 to March 15. Each post contained #ItIsOkToAsk.

Tactic 2: Created an awareness video showcasing how students in the target audience manage mental health issues. The video emphasized mental health does not have an identity because any person can experience a mental health issue. The video was posted on YouTube, the campaign’s social media accounts and Bateman Blue team members’ personal social media accounts. The video was viewed by nearly 700 people.

Evaluation: Objective 1 EXCEEDED
In Bateman Blue’s post-campaign survey, 40 African-American students at Kent State and 49 African-American students at the University of Akron correctly articulated the difference between mental health and mental illness.
#ItIsOkToAsk

**Objective 2:**
Have 300 Kent State and 100 University of Akron students formally pledge to recognize the Five Signs of emotional suffering by March 15, 2017.

**Rationale:** The pre-campaign research showed no recognition of the Five Signs of emotional suffering among the team’s target publics and others Bateman Blue surveyed. Improving awareness of the pledge is a crucial step in educating the target audience on how they can effectively manage their overall mental health.

**Strategy 1:** Use digital media to inform and educate Kent State and Akron students about the pledge, as well as share mental health information.

**Tactic 1:** Bateman Blue’s Twitter and Facebook accounts promoted the Five Signs of emotional suffering and directed Kent and Akron students to the pledge. About half of the daily social media posts between February 17 and March 15 contained information about the pledge and the Five Signs.

**Strategy 2:** Use face-to-face communication with influential organizations and at high-profile events to inform Kent State and Akron students about the pledge.

**Tactic 1:** Bateman Blue worked with Black United Students (BUS) and the Kent State Student Multicultural Center to spread awareness of the Five Signs and the need for positive mental health conversations. BUS used social media to spread awareness while the Multicultural Center worked with the campaign to host the Are You Ok? discussion March 13.

**Tactic 2:** Manned tables at Kent State and Akron on six separate occasions to inform students about the Five Signs of emotional suffering and encourage them to take the pledge.

**Evaluation: Objective 2 EXCEEDED**
During the implementation period, 417 Kent State and Akron students took the pledge. Of the 417 students, 317 were from Kent State and 100 were from Akron. Eighty-seven of those who took the pledge were African American.

**Objective 3:**
Increase awareness among African-American students at Kent State University and the University of Akron so 40 students can recognize three or more of the Five Signs of emotional suffering by March 15, 2017.

**Rationale:** Bateman Blue realized just taking the pledge was not enough, and our target needed to show understanding of the signs. In addition, the team’s research showed in the key public’s culture, a negative perception exists toward those experiencing one or more of the Five Signs of emotional suffering. Changing the perception and encouraging informed discussion among the target audience will enable them to help themselves and provide support to each other.

**Strategy 1:** Use face-to-face communication and incentives to increase knowledge and understanding of the Five Signs of emotional suffering among students.

**Tactic 1:** Distributed wristbands with #ItIsOkToAsk and the Five Signs of emotional suffering, as well as emoticon cookies depicting the Five Signs, at the Kent State Student Center, Kent State Student Recreation and Wellness Center, the Memorial Athletic and Convocation Center and the University of Akron Student Union.
Strategy 2: Develop printed educational material to increase understanding of the Five Signs of emotional suffering.

Tactic 1: Distributed informational cards listing the Five Signs of emotional suffering at Kent and Akron campuses on 10 separate occasions during the implementation period.

Strategy 3: Use digital communication to increase knowledge of the Five Signs of emotional suffering.

Tactic 1: Used #ItIsOkToAsk on Twitter and Facebook to connect with Kent State and Akron students about the relevance of the Five Signs of emotional suffering. Nearly 60 percent of the daily social media posts on the campaign accounts contained information on the Five Signs.

Evaluation: Objective 3 EXCEEDED

In Bateman Blue’s post-campaign survey, 59 African-American students at Kent State and Akron could recognize three or more of the Five Signs of emotional suffering.

Objective 4:

Increase awareness of mental health services so 40 African-American Kent State University and 40 African-American University of Akron students can name at least one mental health resource on their respective campus or in their local area.

Rationale: Educating the target audience on where they can go or direct someone to receive mental health guidance is vital to Are You Ok? #ItIsOkToAsk messaging.

Strategy 1: Create print and digital communication to inform Kent State and Akron students about mental health services offered on their campuses.

Tactic 1: Informed students via the campaign’s Facebook and Twitter accounts about mental health services offered at Kent State and Akron by using #ItIsOkToAsk. About 10 percent of the daily social media posts between February 17 and March 15 contained information on mental health resources.

Tactic 2: Shared articles and links on the campaign’s Facebook and Twitter accounts containing tips on how to better manage mental health. Five of the daily social media posts contained links or articles on how to improve everyday mental health.

Tactic 3: Distributed informational cards during six tabling events listing Kent State University mental health services and University of Akron mental health services.

Objective 4: EXCEEDED

In Bateman Blue’s post-campaign evaluation, 40 African-American students at Kent State and 42 African-American students at Akron named at least one mental health resource on their respective campuses or in the local area.
Conclusion
Bateman Blue’s Are You Ok? campaign succeeded in motivating:

- 417 students to pledge to learn the Five Signs of emotional suffering
- 59 African-American students to name three or more of the Five Signs of emotional suffering
- 82 African-American students to identify a campus or local mental health resource
- 89 African-American students to articulate the differences between mental health and mental illness

Kent State University and University of Akron students helped Bateman Blue’s campaign change the conversation, and in some cases start the conversation, about mental health among our key public of African-American students on both campuses. The campaign helped create an environment open to the idea that anyone can have a bad mental health day without having a mental illness. Besides empowering our target to talk about their mental health, the campaign gave them information and resources to help them better manage their mental health.

This campaign showed Kent State and Akron students #ItIsOKToAsk themselves and those they care about if everything is all right. And it gave them the information needed to help themselves and others.

All the objectives were reached, but more importantly, the campaign made a lasting, positive contribution to the everyday mental health of many Kent and Akron students, especially African Americans.

Campaign photos from left to right:
Tabling at University of Akron, students at the March 13 discussion at the Multicultural Center and the Bateman Blue team.