



## **Study Finds Virtual Role-Play with Avatars Increases Likelihood that Teachers will Act to Prevent Youth Suicide**

*Study conducted among high school teachers in 40 states shows that a new online, interactive training simulation results in statistically significant gains in the likelihood that teachers will intervene with a student exhibiting signs of psychological distress, including depression, anxiety, and suicidal ideation. The results of the study are available at [www.kognito.com/atrisk/research.html](http://www.kognito.com/atrisk/research.html)*

New York, NY ([PRWEB](http://www.kognito.com)) January 13, 2011 -- A study conducted among 327 high school teachers in 40 states shows that a one-hour, online, interactive, training simulation results in statistically significant gains in the likelihood that teachers will intervene with a student exhibiting signs of psychological distress, including depression, anxiety, and suicidal ideation. The results of the study are available at [www.kognito.com/atrisk/research.html](http://www.kognito.com/atrisk/research.html).

### **Key Findings**

The study analyzed the results of surveys taken by teachers who completed Kognito's At-Risk for High School Educators online training simulation versus teachers from a control group who did not.

The results of the study strongly suggest that the training simulation significantly increases:

1. Teachers' ability to identify, approach, and refer at-risk students
2. Teachers' confidence in their ability to help a suicidal student
3. The likelihood that teachers will intervene when faced with a student at risk for psychological distress and suicide. over 97% of participants who received the training indicated they were likely or very likely to approach such a student.

These results were consistent and statistically significant across demographic characteristics which suggest that the At-Risk for High School Educators program is effective for educators regardless of age, gender, and tenure.

The study also found that the interpersonal skills and tactics taught in At-Risk such as using open-ended questions, reflective listening and other motivational interviewing tactics can assist teachers in effectively conducting other challenging conversations they have with their students regarding classroom behavior and academic performance.

### **Game-Based Learning Experience**

At-Risk for High School Educators is an online, interactive training simulation in which users assume the role of a high school teacher and engage in simulated role-play conversations with emotionally responsive student avatars exhibiting signs of depression, anxiety, and suicidal ideation. The virtual students are capable of visually and verbally expressing emotions in reaction to users' decisions during the conversation, effectively replicating real life interactions. In these virtual role-plays, users learn motivational interviewing techniques such as framing open-ended questions and using reflective listening to effectively broach the topic of psychological distress, motivate the at-risk student to seek help, and avoid common pitfalls, such as attempting to counsel the student or diagnose the problem. More information about this program is available at [www.kognito.com/atrisk](http://www.kognito.com/atrisk).



At-Risk for High School Educators is part of a suite of gatekeeper training simulations developed by Kognito and tailored to the needs of specific groups of learners, including university faculty, college students, families of returning veterans, and emergency department personnel. The version of At-Risk for University Faculty is currently in use by over 75 institutions nationwide and is listed on the national Best Practices Registry for suicide prevention resources administered by the Suicide Prevention Resource Center and the American Foundation of Suicide Prevention. A demo of the training for university faculty can be viewed by clicking on “demo” at [www.kognito.com/atrisk](http://www.kognito.com/atrisk).

#### Adopted in Texas and New York

Launched in September 2010, the At-Risk for High School Educators program has been adopted by several states including the Texas Department of Health Services and the New York State Department of Mental Health to provide training to more than 70,000 high school educators.

"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 Mental Health America of Texas which administered the roll out of the course through out the state; “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."

"This national study clearly communicates the value of simulations and gaming technology in developing the interpersonal skills needed to manage challenging conversations in the areas of health and behavioral health", said Ron Goldman, CEO of Kognito.

#### About Kognito

Kognito is an award-winning developer of online role-playing simulations, where users develop interpersonal skills and learn to effectively manage challenging conversations in the areas of health and behavioral health. Simulations are built using Kognito's proprietary Human Interaction Simulation Platform™ which is based on research in social cognition, neuroscience, and motivational interviewing. In these simulations, learners enter virtual environments, engage in practice conversations with emotionally responsive avatars, and receive personalized feedback. Kognito's flagship product line, At-Risk, is successfully used by over 75 academic institutions and several states and federal agencies to train teachers, students, families of veterans, and health providers to recognize and refer those exhibiting signs of psychological distress, thoughts of suicide, and PTSD. Headquartered in New York City, the company has received numerous prestigious awards including the 2009 Training Product of the Year and the 2007 and 2008 Learning Leader Awards. For more information, visit <http://www.kognito.com>.

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