Coping with Increases in Requests for Help

Northeastern Illinois University, Chicago

- A commuter campus of approx 12,000 highly-diverse, nontraditional students
- No residence halls, no residence Life staff, mean age=29, most 1st generation college students
- Clinical demand increasing 10-20% annually for past 5-6 yrs...
- No increases in permanent staff; 50% of services provided by trainees (externs, intakes, postdocs)

Increase Help-seeking behavior Identify students at risk Outreach to all sectors of univ community Outreach directly to • multiple access to screening tools students work to detoxify help-seeking multiple access to screening opportunities outreach to faculty **Provide Mental Health Services** Comprehensive Approach Northeastern's application to Suicide Prevention and of the JED Foundation's traditional on-campus therapy Mental Health Promotion comprehensive approach and counseling services... • intake as "helpful"... • referral to outside providers... Develop Life Skills • "Feel Better Fast," shortterm, 4 sessions, repeated Restrict Access to Potentially **Lethal Means** "Mindfulness-based Stress Reduction workshops," • Monitor parking garage ongoing, supportive and • But limited control: preventive focus o commuter campus, no dorms or RA staff o Students live off-campus in their own communities o It's a big city... you can get anything you want...

Intakes themselves can be therapeutic and relieve significant stress

- not just data collecting, but supportive, motivational and therapeutic in their own right
- often must retrain interns and practicum students who come from medical settings

Training Issues

- interns and externs are eager to build caseloads, especially at beginning of academic year, but...
- "Is this student a prime therapy candidate, or might other options be a reasonable match?"
- "Is therapy the only response for this student, or might I recommend a good enough alternative?"
- "What does this client actually want?" vs. doing what we want as therapists
- Most clients don't come in asking for counseling... rather they feel bad and want help...