

Mental Health: Building Positive Climates for Learning

Special
Education
Legislative
Summit **2022**
July 10-13, 2022



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#SELS2022





2022 Special Education Legislative Summit

Council of Administrators of Special Education and Council for Exceptional Children

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July 11, 2022

The State of Youth Mental Health

- Approximately 20% of children are experiencing significant mental, emotional, or behavioral symptoms that would qualify them for a psychiatric diagnosis
 - Over-identification of certain student subgroups or behaviors (e.g., children of minoritized populations with externalizing behavior problems) and under-identification of others (e.g., internalizing problems).
- Youth mental health in the COVID-19 pandemic
 - After one month of lockdown, 20% increase of kids experienced depression or anxiety
 - Disproportionate impact on underrepresented groups
 - 31% increase in mental health related ER visits
 - COVID has exacerbated existing risk factors

Disparities in Access to Mental Health Services

- Nearly 70% of youth with mental health problems do not receive the treatment they need
- A 2019 report from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMSHA) indicates that 60% of the nearly 4 million 12- to 17-year-olds who reported a major depressive episode in the past year did not receive any treatment whatsoever.
- Children most likely to access mental health services in an educational setting only are those...
 - Receiving public insurance
 - Living in low-income neighborhoods
 - From racial/ethnic minoritized groups

Mental Health Impact on School Functioning

- Children with untreated mental health problems are placed at greater risk for a variety of negative outcomes including...
 - School avoidance
 - Poor school adjustment
 - Learning difficulties
 - Social rejection
 - Aggressive behavior
 - School dropout

Need for a Multifaceted Approach to School Mental Health



- Use a multitiered system of support (MTSS) model to provide mental health services
 - Tier 1: Universal wellness promotion and prevention
 - Tier 2: Targeted school interventions
 - Tier 3: Intensive school interventions / Community partnering
- Ensure at a minimum a maintenance of existing school-based mental health providers, and aspire to national recommendations
 - School psychologists: 1:500 students
 - School counselors: 1:250
 - School social workers: 1:250
 - School nurses: 1:750

Mental Health



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Mental Health Panel

Kenneth Polishchuk, Senior Director for Congressional & Federal Relations
Education Policy Lead

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July 11, 2022

Mental health concerns among youth

- In a given year, as many as 20% of school-age children meet the diagnostic criteria for a mental health disorder, but only 12% receive services to address these issues.
- Suicide rates among children 10 years and older have also climbed significantly since 2007, making suicide the second leading cause of death among adolescents before the pandemic.
- These concerns are further amplified among students from underserved populations, including communities of color.

Pandemic exacerbated these concerns

- APA's Stress in America survey finds that high numbers of teenagers are facing continued uncertainty and experiencing high levels of stress and signs of depression.
- National screenings show that children, adolescents and teens have struggled emotionally during the pandemic more than any other age group, with one-third of teen girls and one-fifth of teen boys experiencing a new or worsening anxiety.
- CDC data show that from April through October 2020, the proportion of children between the ages of 5 and 11 visiting an emergency room due to a mental health crisis increased by 24 percent as compared to the previous year.
- Nearly 167,000 children have lost a parent or caregiver during COVID-19.

Pandemic exacerbated these concerns

- Twenty-one percent of high schoolers indicated that the past year was the first time they considered using school-based mental health services.
- 77% of Black and Latino students reported more struggles with their mental or behavioral health, approximately 9 points higher than their white or Asian counterparts.
- Low-income students were also substantially more likely to report experiencing such concerns.
- Additional data show the greater risk of violence, harassment, and discrimination Asian-American students face, and how LGBTQ+ students have experienced increased anxiety and stress.

Shortages of Mental Health Providers

- Nationally, the U.S. is facing a serious shortage of mental and behavioral health providers, including psychologists.
- According to SAMHSA, approximately 20 percent of the population with any mental illness had unmet mental health needs, including 39 percent of the population with serious mental illness reporting unmet needs.
- APA data show that from 2015 to 2030, the supply of psychologists is projected to be insufficient to address this unmet need.
- This research projects a shortage of 13,930 psychologists by 2030.

Shortages of School-Based Mental Health Professionals

Recommended vs. Actual Student to Provider Ratios

- **School Psychologists**
 - *Recommended:* 500 students per school psychologist
 - *Actual:* 1400 students per school psychologist
- **School Social Workers**
 - *Recommended:* 250 students per school social worker
 - *Actual:* 760 students per school social worker
- **School Counselors**
 - *Recommended:* 250 students per school counselor
 - *Actual:* 464 students per school counselor

Value of School-Based Mental Health Services

- Comprehensive mental health services in schools reduce the frequency and severity of mental health disorders among students by providing a full complement of supports and services that promote positive school climates, social and emotional learning practices, and overall mental health and well-being.
- School-based mental health professionals are not only a means of providing more access to mental health services for students, but also improve school climate and make them safer places.
- Such services are also essential to effective teaching and learning and help address student behavior.



Bipartisan Safer Communities Act

- Directs CMS to update guidance on how schools can fully use Medicaid to support mental health programs.
- Provides millions of dollars in new funding for school-based mental health services.
- Provides \$1 billion to Department of Education grant programs that will grow the workforce of qualified school-based mental health professionals.
- Provides \$1 billion for the Department of Education's Student Support and Academic Enrichment (Title IV-A) program.

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Our “Asks”.....

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Members of Congress are urged to:

- Provide \$1 billion for Safe Schools National Activities.
- Provide \$3 billion for ESSA, Title II-A.
- Provide \$2 billion for ESSA, Title IV-A.
- Provide \$300 million for IDEA, Part D, Personnel Preparation.
- Maintain Medicaid to reimburse IDEA services, and support legislation increasing access to MH services through private health insurance and Medicaid.

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Members of Congress are also urged to:

- Support policies & funding for services and community interventions for children and youth experiencing trauma, environmental stress & MH symptoms & disorders.
- Support policies & funding that promote prevention & interdisciplinary partnerships among education and other agencies & providers to ensure children's social/emotional well-being.