The Federal Perspective on Adolescent Mental Health and the Value of Schools

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Who We Are, What We Do
We envision a future where all youth in the U.S. will be equipped with the knowledge, skills, and resources for a healthy adolescence and adulthood.
How DASH Helps

• **School District Support**
  • School district-based approach to improve primary prevention of HIV, other STDs, and teen pregnancy through the prevention of behaviors and experiences that place youth at risk

• **Research and Applied Evaluation**
  • Monitoring and evaluation of district programs as well as tool development and investigation of emerging issues and solutions

• **Surveillance**
  • School-based surveillance of youth behaviors and experiences and school policies and practices
The Mental Health of Youth in the U.S. Is Moving in the Wrong Direction
The Percentage of Students Who Experience Distress and Suicidality Is Increasing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Status</th>
<th>2007 Total</th>
<th>2009 Total</th>
<th>2011 Total</th>
<th>2013 Total</th>
<th>2015 Total</th>
<th>2017 Total</th>
<th>Trend</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Experienced persistent feelings of sadness or hopelessness</td>
<td>28.5</td>
<td>26.1</td>
<td>28.5</td>
<td>29.9</td>
<td>29.9</td>
<td>31.5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seriously considered attempting suicide</td>
<td>14.5</td>
<td>13.8</td>
<td>15.8</td>
<td>17.0</td>
<td>17.7</td>
<td>17.2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Made a suicide plan</td>
<td>11.3</td>
<td>10.9</td>
<td>12.8</td>
<td>13.6</td>
<td>14.6</td>
<td>13.6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attempted suicide</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>8.6</td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Were injured in a suicide attempt</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For the complete wording of YRBS questions, refer to Appendix. 
Female Students Are at Increasing Levels of Distress

From 2007 to 2017, a significantly greater percentage of female students experienced persistent feelings of sadness and hopelessness compared to male students.

Sexual Minority Youth Experience Disproportionate Rates of Distress

Significantly higher percentages of lesbian, gay, or bisexual students and students not sure of their sexual identity experienced sad or hopeless feelings.

A significantly higher percentage of students who had sexual contact with only the same sex or both sexes experienced sad or hopeless feelings.
Sexual Minority Youth Experience Disproportionate Rates of Suicidality

Significantly higher percentages of lesbian, gay, or bisexual students and students not sure of their sexual identity attempted suicide.

Significantly higher percentages of students who had sexual contact with only the same sex or both sexes and students who had sexual contact with only the opposite sex attempted suicide.
The Effects of Poor Mental Health in Adolescence Are Far-Reaching
Too Many Adolescents Experience Multiple Risks

**Intersection of Risk Areas**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>High-Risk Substance Use*</th>
<th>Violence Victimization</th>
<th>Mental Health</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Violence Victimization</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental Health</td>
<td>12.7%</td>
<td>23.8%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual Behavior</td>
<td>12.7%</td>
<td>18.3%</td>
<td>17.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*High-Risk Substance Use refers to use of illicit substances, injection substances, opioids

Source: National Youth Risk behavior Survey, 2017
Despite Consequences and Disease Burden, Treatment Gaps Remain

Schools Play a Critical Role in Promoting Adolescent Mental Health
Schools Are A Primary Provider of Mental Health Services

* Difference between this estimate and the 2018 estimate is statistically significant at the .05 level.

Schools Provide Opportunities for Support

**Tier 3**
- Targeted interventions for students with serious concerns that impact daily functioning

**Tier 2**
- Supports and early intervention for students identified through needs assessments as being at risk for mental health concerns

**Tier 1**
- Promotion of positive social, emotional, and behavioral skills and overall wellness for all students

**Foundational Elements**
- Professional development and support for a healthy school workforce
- Family-school-community partnerships

How Can Schools Support All Students?
Health Education

with medically accurate, developmentally appropriate, and culturally inclusive content that builds knowledge and skills needed to promote healthy behaviors and avoid risks.
Health Services
that connect students with non-stigmatizing, confidential, accessible, and youth-friendly health providers.
Safe and Supportive Environments
where students feel engaged in their school life and connected to important adults at school and at home.
Feeling Connected to Family and School Has Long-Lasting Positive Effects on Adolescents Well Into Adulthood

Strong connections to FAMILY and SCHOOL

Can lead to decreases in
- Physical Violence
- Multiple Sex Partners
- Rx Misuse
- Emotional Distress
- STD Infection
- Illicit Drug Use
## Activities That Increase School Connectedness

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Professional Development</th>
<th>Youth Development Programs</th>
<th>Student Led Clubs</th>
<th>Sharing Resources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Providing professional development on classroom management techniques, and policies and practices that support youth</td>
<td>Implementing school-based positive youth development programs, or connecting students to programs in their community</td>
<td>Establishing and enhancing student-led clubs that support LGBTQ youth</td>
<td>Sharing resources with families about positive parenting practices</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
School-Based Primary Prevention Is Effective and Valuable
School-Based Primary Prevention Programs Increase School Connectedness

School connectedness interventions:
- Family/community mentoring programs
- Service learning opportunities
- Student-led clubs to provide safe spaces
- Professional development for educators on classroom management
We currently reach about 2 million students in 28 large school districts at a cost of less than $10 per student.
Summary

• Mental health among adolescents is a critical public health issue
• The good news is that we know what works
  • Primary prevention saves lives and money
  • School connectedness improves students outcomes
  • Schools are key to this work
• Our Nation’s youth need help, and we have tools to start
For More Information

• Web: www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth
• Twitter: @CDC_DASH
• E-mail: nccddashinfo@cdc.gov
• Telephone: 1-800-CDC-INFO (1-800-232-4636)

The findings and conclusions in this report are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official position of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.