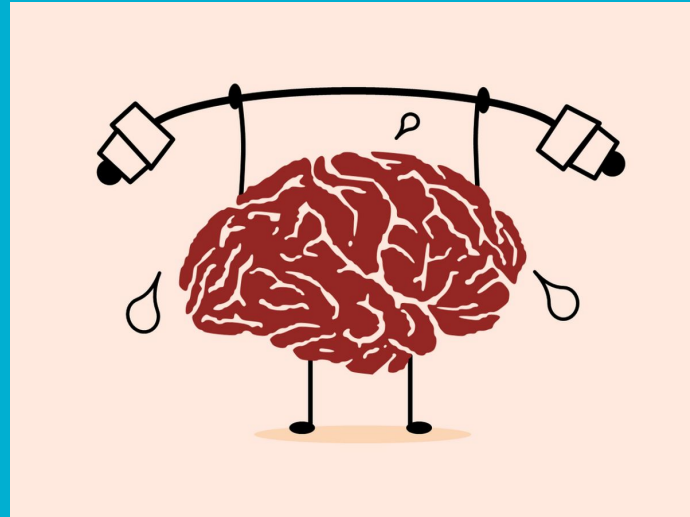


School and Community Players Important to Children's Mental Health



Agenda

- What is Mental Health and Why it is Important?
- Current Trends in Schools
- Mental Health Myth
- Disclaimer
- Important Roles in schools
- Important Roles in the Community



What is Mental Health and Why it is Important?

- According to the CDC mental health is defined as, “Mental health includes our emotional, psychological, and social well-being. It affects how we think, feel, and act.”
- Mental health is important because it impacts everything in our life. It impacts our interaction with others and with the world. It affects how we feel and what we do. Our mental health also impacts our physical health as well. Some mental illnesses have been shown to lead to negative physical illness such as heart disease, diabetes, and more (CDC).

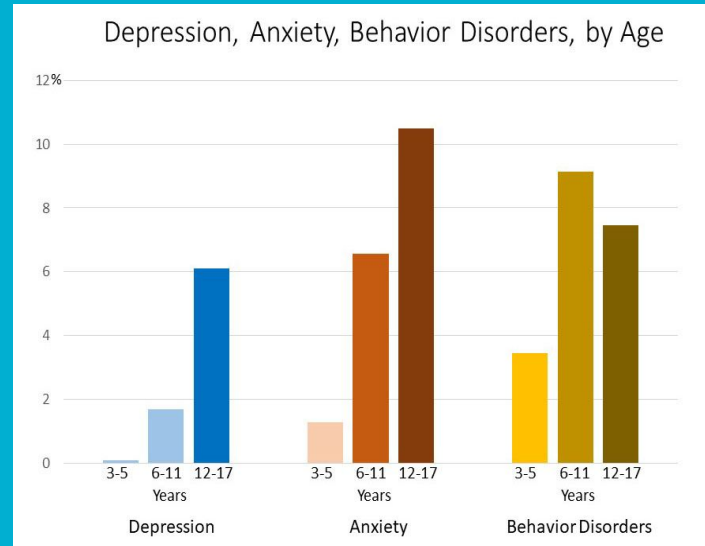


What are the Mental Health Trends for Students

- Anywhere from 13%-20% of adolescence report having mental health issues in a given year (Shelton 2021).
- According to the National Alliance on mental illness, depression is the most prevalent mental health struggle in adults.
- According to HRSA, children between the ages of 3-17 have slightly higher rates of depression, behavior problems, and anxiety when compared to their urban counterparts:
 - Depression: 4.5%
 - Behavior problems: 9.2%
 - Anxiety: 9.4%

Most Prevalent Mental Health Disorders in Adolescence:

- Depression
- Bipolar
- Anxiety Disorders
- Psychotic disorders such as schizophrenia



Mental Health Through the Eyes of School and Community Players

When asked about specific mental health challenges students today are facing, these themes arose:

- Increased depression and anxiety
- History of trauma
- Behavioral issues
- Substance use
- Identity crisis
- Loneliness
- Broken homes
- COVID-19 aftermath
- Overstimulation
- Higher number of ADD, ADHD, ODD, and Bipolar cases
- Undiagnosed disorders
- Self-esteem issues

Mental Health Myth

School Counselors are the only people important to student mental health.

FALSE

There are many people in the schools and community that are important to student mental health.

TRUE

Disclaimer

This is not an all encompassing list. In each area and region, there are more resources for students to utilize when in need of help. Some services are unique to specific areas.

Important Roles in Schools



School Counselor

Role: A school counselor is an individual who helps students with their academic journey as well as their emotional and mental wellness. School counselors are advocates and leaders in the school and they also design school counseling programs based on school needs to help many students.

Why they are important: The work done by the counselor directly impacts student's emotional wellbeing. School counselors also play a role in academics and the social environment. Student's come to counselors to discuss mental health struggles, and the school counselor helps them by being an advocate and getting the student connected to resources they may need.

Teachers

Role: An educator that frequently sees students.

Why they are important: Teachers are important because they set the tone for the students. They are seen by the students and interact with them more frequently than other roles in the school. The environment culminated by teachers effects students significantly. They are also important because when students are struggling with their mental health they seek a trusted individual for help, which may be their teacher.

Administrators

Role: Administrators manage the school. They support initiatives that address student needs and find resources to implement policies and program development. Some administrators take a very active role in the mental health of their students by meeting with them and helping create programs.

Why they are important: Their support in programs that address student mental health is important to encourage implementation, some students also confide in administrators about their mental health struggles.

School Psychologists

Role: School psychologists assess students for learning disabilities, in some counties they also help with FBA's, IEPs, and more interventions.

Why they are important: The interventions planned or supported by the school psychologists impact the student's mental health in numerous ways. When a student does not receive the intervention that is needed, it can negatively affect the student's mental health. With the support of the school psychologist more resources become accessible.

School Social Worker

Role: Roles differ from county to county. Some counties have the social worker focus on children and some counties prefer a family systems approach.

Why they are important: School social workers play a role on numerous teams such as the threat assessment team and the special education team. The role of the school social worker is to help obtain needed resources for the family and child. Some examples include mentoring services, outpatient counseling, and other programs.

Restorative Practice Specialists

Role: They are individuals who implement programs and policies that align with restorative practices.

Why they are important: Research shows that negative forms of discipline do not help the child and are considered ineffective (Weaver & Swank 2020). In restorative practices, they focus on positive behaviors and how to increase positive behaviors, rather than eliminate negative behavior. Restorative practice specialists are advocates for what their students need to enhance positive behavior. Sometimes, these needs are mental health resources, which they play an active role in. They can also be the person students confide in.

School Nurse

Role: The school nurse is a qualified healthcare professional that provides students with care regarding certain illnesses and injuries.

Why they are important: Some students may feel more comfortable confiding in the school nurse about serious issues. Many mental health challenges also have physical symptoms, such as anxiety. This puts the school nurse in a very important role, such as informing the student about the physical toll of mental health struggles.

Additionally, school nurses can uncover mental health challenges, which leads to them collaborating with other professionals within the building.

Superintendent and the School Board

Superintendent's Role: The superintendent is in charge of numerous schools, they help develop and direct policies and rules, obtain resources, and provide leadership to the district.

Why they are important: The direction of the superintendent has a large effect on student mental health.

School Board's Role: The school board is a group of elected officials that support policies and help obtain resources for plans. The school board has 3 major responsibilities; set policies, oversee finances, select superintendent

Why they are important: One role the school board has is to select the superintendent, this decision heavily impacts the students. The school board also oversees finances and this can impact what policies can be set.

Everyone in the school

Examples: Office administrators, custodians, cafeteria employees, etc.

Why they are important: When interviewing our many participants each participant emphasized how the everyone in the school creates the school environment that affects the student's mental health.

Some Practices Used in Schools

- Restorative circles
- Groups
- Check-ins
- Calm room
- Food pantry
- Clothing drive

Restorative Circles



Source: Women Wonder Writers

Groups

- Some counselors talked about starting groups with students. This give them the opportunity to talk with students who are dealing with similar issues. This gives them a support system and helps reduce their feelings of loneliness.

Check-ins

- Some counselors reported not having enough time to individually meet with all students. Because of this they have developed a check-in system. This means that students that have mental health struggles will have a check-in buddy like a teacher or administrator that will check-in with them frequently and report to the counselor if they are hearing worrisome behavior.

Calm Room

Now what?

While you may be experiencing a variety of emotions, we have tons of resources to help you develop coping strategies for those feelings that you can do here **and** at home. We encourage you to try something new while you're in here if you are able to, you never know if something will work until you try.

What's here that you can use?

- Journals
- Art supplies
- Fidgets
- Sand tray
- Kinetic sand
- Buddha board
- Coloring books
- Sketch journal (we also have water colors!)
- Small weighted pillow and blanket

Some things that we've done here to make the space a bit more comfortable:

- Dim lighting
- Essential oil diffuser
- Alternative seating
- Mural
- Fountain
- White noise or other calming music/sounds
- Trees and greenery

*We ask that you don't take or remove anything from this room unless a counselor says you can. It's important that other students have access to these resources too.



Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs



Source: Shutterstock

Food Pantry



Clothing Drive



Community



Community Services Board (CSB)

Role: Community Service Boards provide individuals with numerous services and programs to aid them in a wide variety of areas, such as mental health.

Why they are important: Community Service Boards have numerous mental health care professionals including counselors, psychiatrists, registered nurses, social workers, and many more. They provide an array of programs, such as wellness programs. Additionally, some Community Services Boards are very active within the school system. They can provide clinicians for the students to have access to. With a wide variety of programs offered, the CSB plays a very important role in student mental health.

Medical Personnel

Examples: nurses, doctors, technicians

Why they are important: Some students feel more comfortable confiding in a healthcare provider. Most medical personnel are well trained in mental health and can help the student understand what mental health is and also refer the student to counseling to help them with their mental health.

Families

Why they are important: The environment and culture in the family heavily impacts the mental health of children and their perception of mental health. This impacts whether the child will seek out help. Families also spend the most time with the children, they will likely notice changes first, and in many families, can serve as a resource for the child. Children may confide in them and rely on them to obtain resources for them. Families can both negatively and positively impact mental health.

Hotlines

Harrisonburg-Rockingham CSB: (540)-434-1766

State of Virginia: 1-800-SUICIDE (1-800-784-2433) and 1-800-273-TALK
(1-800-273-8255)

National Suicide and Crisis Lifeline: Call or Text 988

Text “HOME” to 741741 if you are having suicidal thoughts or urges to be connected
to the National Crisis Text Line

How Have These Roles Been Impacted by Being in a Rural Community

When asked about challenges faced within the rural community regarding responding to student mental health, here were some common themes that arose:

- Wide-radius making transportation to and from school difficult
- Racial tensions and the lack of access to translators, unlike urban schools
- Difficulty accessing resources and lack thereof
 - Wifi
- Lack of access to specialized care
- Hard to obtain funding due to density of the population
- Cultural tensions
- Food insecurity
- Understaffed schools
 - Underpaid in rural communities
- Decreased parental involvement

Thank You

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Donna Delisle, School Social Worker in Rockingham County

Lori Golden, School Psychologist in Rockingham County

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Matt Kinman, Director of School Counseling at Broadway High School

Stacy Knighton, First-grade Teacher at W.W. Robinson

Tim Luikart, Director of Counseling at Montevideo Middle School

Dr. Charlette McQuilkin, School Board Member, Rockingham County

Teresa Rice, Supervisor of Child Adolescent Clinical Services at Harrisonburg-Rockingham CSB

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