

MENTAL HEALTH

The Issue

School-based mental health services are often insufficiently available and restricted to youth with a specific mental health diagnosis. This limits accessibility for many youth in need, while stigmatizing students who do seek support.

Scope of the Problem

- ✓ Chronic sadness and hopelessness are rampant among Solano County public school students. A recent report found that 29% of 7th graders, 31% of 9th graders, and 37% of 11th graders had suffered from these experiences in the past 12 months.¹
- ✓ Shockingly, almost 1 in 5 of these students have considered suicide in the past year.²
- ✓ Mental health-related hospitalizations have increased by more than 70% over the past decade in Solano County for children ages 5 to 19.³
- ✓ While the American School Counselor Association recommends a student-to-school-counselor ratio of no more than 250:1, in Solano County there are an average of 1,111 students per counselor,⁴ more than four times the recommended number.
- ✓ The National Association of School Psychologists recommends a student-to-school-psychologist ratio of no more than 1,000:1, in Solano County there are an average of 1,190⁵ students per psychologist.

Recommendation

Expand the availability and accessibility of non-stigmatizing and culturally-competent school-based mental health services for students.

“When I was in High School I often felt isolated and pressured to deal with my declining mental health alone. I believe that if our recommendations are implemented they will help reduce teen suicide rates and other serious outcomes related to mental health such as school drop out rates, hospitalization, and homelessness.”

–Beck, SYV Council Member (age 20)

Steps for Consideration

1. Establish a public-private task force or committee to identify barriers to universal access to school-based mental health services and provide recommendations.
2. Develop a “safe space” on each campus where students under stress or in crisis can anonymously receive mental health supports and services during the school day.
3. Develop a student group on each campus focused on educating peers about mental health issues and addressing school culture related to mental health.



Solano Youth Voices

A partner of the Children's
Network of Solano County

¹ Solano County. *California Healthy Kids Survey, 2015–2017: Main Report*. San Francisco: West Ed Health and Justice Program for the California Department of Education. Pg. 3.

² Ibid

³ Hospitalizations for Mental Health Issues, by Age Group (2006–2016). As cited on www.kidsdata.org, a program of the Lucile Packard Foundation for Children's Health. Retrieved on April 2, 2019.

⁴ Ratio of Students to Pupil Support Service Personnel, by Type of Personnel (2017). As cited on www.kidsdata.org, a program of the Lucile Packard Foundation for Children's Health. Retrieved on April 2, 2019.

⁵ Ibid