

The Impact of Behavioral Health on Academic Success

Behavioral health encompasses both mental health and substance use and affects students' ability to learn and succeed academically.¹ It affects how students feel, think, and act; their self-esteem and ability to relate to others; their capacity to evaluate situations and make choices.



Students who receive treatment for their behavioral health problems do better academically.

Prevalence

It is estimated that 25%, or one in four, young people suffers some sort of behavioral health problem sufficient enough to impair his or her ability to maintain daily activities, such as attending school, completing homework, participating in family activities, or spending time with friends.² Depression is one of the most serious and common problems encountered by students of all ages. The 2007 NM Youth Risk and Resiliency Survey (YRRS) found that of students in grades 9-12:

- 30.8% had persistent feelings of sadness or hopelessness,
- 19.3% seriously considered attempting suicide, and
- 14.3% attempted suicide one or more times.

Treatment Offers Hope for Success

In any given year, it is estimated that fewer than one in five students receives needed treatment.³ Students who do not receive treatment for their behavioral health problem are less likely to engage in their studies and succeed in school.⁴ They are more likely to experience a worsening of their symptoms, which may manifest themselves through violent behavior, such as aggression, assault, or suicide.¹ Simply put, students who receive treatment for their behavioral health problems do better academically than those who don't receive treatment.⁵ They are more likely to develop and use the skills needed to overcome their problems. This allows them to focus on their studies and feel connected to their schools.

Role of School-Based Health Centers

The good news is that many New Mexico schools have a school-based health center where students can receive treatment for behavioral health problems. There are 84 school-based health centers across the state, 73 of which provide behavioral health treatment. Effective behavioral health care involves collaboration between service providers in each school-based health center, school, and the community.

Take Action

- Let your school leadership know how crucial it is to offer behavioral health services that address the needs of the diverse student population.
- Call your state legislators and tell them, too. Go to <http://legis.state.nm.us/LCS/LEGISLATORSEARCH.ASP> to get their telephone numbers.
- Join the NM Alliance for School-Based Health Care. Sign up at <http://www.nmasbhc.org/>.
- Call your federal legislators and ask them to support SBHCs. Go to <https://forms.house.gov/wyr/welcome.shtml> to locate your representative and http://www.senate.gov/general/contact_information/senators_cfm.cfm for your senator.

More Information

- Center for School Mental Health, University of Maryland School of Medicine - <http://csmh.umaryland.edu>.
- School Mental Health Project, Center for Mental Health In Schools, UCLA - <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu>.
- National Assembly on School-Based Health Care (NASBHC) - <http://www.nasbhc.org>.

References

1. National Youth Violence Prevention Resource Center. <http://www.safeyouth.org/scripts/facts/mental.asp>
2. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. http://www.cdc.gov/HealthyYouth/yrbs/pdf/yrbs07_mmwr.pdf
3. "Prevalence of serious emotional disturbance in children and adolescents." Mental Health, United States, 1996. Center for Mental Health Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1996.
4. Green, D., Peñaloza, L.J., Chrisp, E., Dillon, M., Cassell, C.M., Tsinajinnie, E. Rinehart, J. & Ortega, W. (2006). New Mexico Youth Risk and Resiliency Survey(YRRS): 2005 Report of State Results. New Mexico Departments of Health & Public Education; Santa Fe, NM. YRRS 2005 NM <http://www.health.state.nm.us/epi/pdf/2005YRRSStatewideReport.pdf>
5. National Assembly on School-Based Health Care. http://www.adcieohost.com/nasbhc/downloads/PUB_Academic_Outcomes.pdf