



# BY ALEXANDRIA CITY HIGH SCHOOL



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## TOPIC

# Mental Health

## TOPIC DESCRIPTION

Youth mental health is a critical and growing concern in Alexandria, Virginia, as in many communities nationwide. Local data and community feedback reveal that many young people face challenges such as anxiety, depression, trauma, and substance use—all of which can hinder their academic success, relationships, and long-term well-being. The City of Alexandria has taken a proactive, collaborative approach to address these issues. The Children & Youth Community Plan 2025 (CYCP) sets long-term priorities and provides a roadmap to success through community-wide coordination and delivery of services to all city children. The Alexandria City Public Schools (ACPS) system supports students through dedicated Student Support Teams at every school, composed of counselors, psychologists, social workers, and nurses.

## RESULT

The hoped outcome of addressing youth mental health in Alexandria, Virginia is a healthier, more resilient generation of young people who have the support they need to succeed in school, develop strong relationships, and lead fulfilling lives.

## CYCP GOAL AND STRATEGIC AREA

Our topic fits under the positive youth mental health aspect of the CYCP report card. We plan to create a club at ACHS called the “Share and Care Club”. Its intention is to provide a place for students to anonymously share their struggles and confide in a safe space.

## SIGNIFICANCE

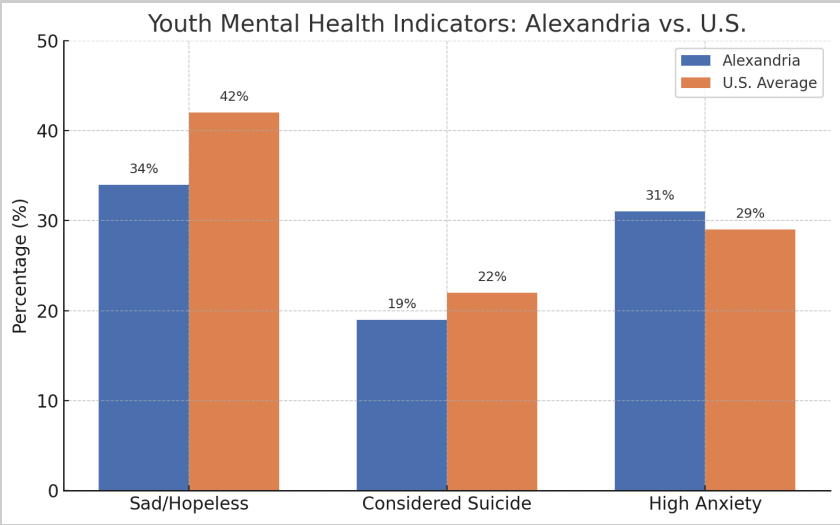
The well-being of young people directly affects their health, education, and the opportunities they have for a successful future. When youth don't have access to essential resources like mental health support, safe and inclusive schools, and high-quality education, it severely limits their ability to grow, learn, and reach their full potential. These challenges can have long-lasting consequences, not only for the individuals affected but also for society as a whole. This is an issue that should concern everyone. Mental health struggles among youth are becoming increasingly common, and the lack of support systems is contributing to a global crisis. Each year, more than 800,000 people die by suicide worldwide—an alarming statistic that includes around 45,000 deaths annually in the United States alone. Behind each number is a life that could have been saved with the right support, care, and access to resources. Addressing these issues is not just a matter of compassion—it's a critical investment in the future of our communities and our world.

## HOW ARE WE DOING?

Youth mental health in Alexandria is a growing concern. According to the 2022 ACPS Youth Risk Behavior Survey,

- 34% of students reported feeling persistently sad or hopeless.
- 19% seriously considered suicide.

These numbers are close to national averages, showing this is a local and national issue. Alexandria's numbers are slightly better than the national average but still very concerning. This data shows the urgent need for support programs like the “Share and Care Club.”

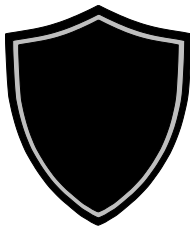
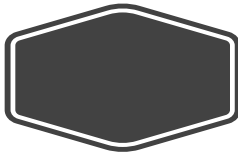


## IMPLEMENTATION

To support youth mental health efforts are being made at both the city and school levels. The Children and Youth Community Plan 2025 guides long-term goals by promoting coordination across services. In schools, Student Support Teams made up of counselors, social workers, nurses, and psychologists are in place to help students manage mental health challenges. To build on these efforts, we plan to launch the Share and Care Club at ACHS. This student-led club will offer a safe, anonymous space for teens to share their struggles and support one another. By encouraging peer connection and emotional openness, the club will help reduce stigma and help with the plan’s goal of positive youth mental health.

## PARTNERSHIPS

- The Growth and Healing Hub



## PERFORMANCE EFFORT

It’s still early, but signs of progress are visible. Student Support Teams are helping more students access mental health services, and awareness around these issues is growing. The Share and Care Club aims to build a safe space for students to open up and support each other. As participation increases and students feel more comfortable seeking help, we expect to see lasting improvements in youth mental health.

## PERFORMANCE EFFECT

Positive factors include strong community support, the CYCP’s clear goals, and the presence of mental health professionals in schools. These efforts make it easier for students to access help and feel supported. However, there are still barriers. Stigma around mental health can prevent students from speaking up, and not all students may feel comfortable joining a club or seeking support. Limited resources and staff availability can also affect how quickly students get help. Without continued investment and open dialogue, the long-term consequences may include ongoing struggles with academic performance, relationships, and overall well-being.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

To strengthen youth mental health support in Alexandria, several policy actions are recommended. First, increase funding for school-based mental health services to ensure every student has timely access to counselors and psychologists. Second, expand training for teachers and staff to recognize early signs of mental health struggles and respond effectively. Third, support student-led initiatives like the Share and Care Club by providing resources, space, and faculty sponsorship. Lastly, launch city-wide awareness campaigns to reduce stigma and encourage open conversations about mental health. These steps can help create a safer, more supportive environment for all students.

## ONLINE

<https://www.nami.org/>  
NAMI offers a comprehensive collection of resources tailored for young individuals, educators, and families.  
<https://mhanational.org/>  
MHA’s Youth Mental Health section is dedicated to providing resources that help young individuals understand and manage their mental health.

## IN PERSON

1. Alexandria Community Services Board (CSB) – Youth and Family Services
2. School-Based Student Support Teams (SST) at Alexandria City High School (ACHS)

## CITATIONS

Alexandria Department of Community and Human Services. Children & Youth Community Plan 2025 (CYCP). City of Alexandria, 2023, [www.alexandriava.gov/DCHS/children-youth-community-plan](http://www.alexandriava.gov/DCHS/children-youth-community-plan).

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