

# BY ALEXANDRIA CITY HIGH SCHOOL

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## TOPIC

Mental Health and Access to School Counselors

### TOPIC DESCRIPTION

Many students at ACHS are affected by stress, anxiety, depression, and other mental health challenges. These issues can make it harder for students to focus in class, complete assignments, and maintain healthy relationships. Some students may also struggle to access school counselors quickly because there are not enough counselors available for the number of students. This issue matters at ACHS because mental health affects attendance, academic success, and overall student well being. Increasing access to counselors would help students feel more supported and create a healthier school environment.

#### BASELINE DATA & GOAL

**BASELINE:**

According to the 2022 ACPS Youth Risk Behavior Survey, 34% of students reported feeling persistently sad or hopeless, and 19% seriously considered suicide. These numbers show that youth mental health is a serious issue in Alexandria and that many students need additional emotional support

**GOAL:**

The goal is to lower student stress and sadness from 34% to 25% by improving access to counselors and mental health resources at ACHS.

#### CYCP GOAL & STRATEGIC AREA

**CYCP GOAL:**

Improve youth mental health and overall well being.

**STRAGTIC AREA:**

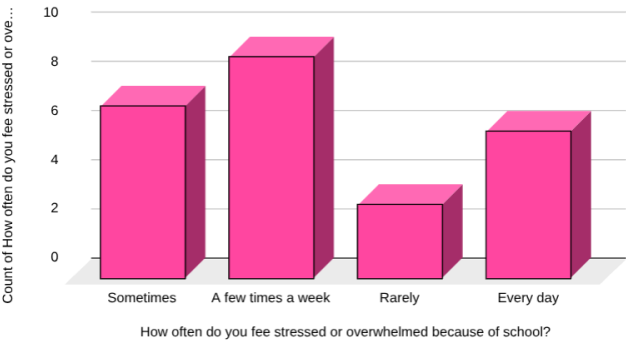
Physical, Mental & Behavioral Health

**CONNECTION:**

This issue connects to the CYCP goal because many ACHS students struggle with stress, anxiety, and sadness. Increasing access to counselors and mental health support can help students feel safer, healthier, and more successful in school.

## WHAT IS HAPPENING RIGHT NOW?

Student Stress Levels at ACHS



**WHAT DOES THE DATE SHOW?**

The graph shows that 24% of students feel stressed every day, while 36% feel stressed a few times a week. Another 28% said they sometimes feel stressed, and only 12% said they rarely feel stressed. This means that most ACHS students experience stress regularly.

**WHAT DOES THIS MATTER?**

This matters because frequent stress can negatively affect students mental health, focus, sleep, and academic performance. The data shows that many students may need more mental health support and easier access to counselors at ACHS.

**WHAT DOES THE DATE SHOW?**

The graph shows that 56% of students said they have wanted to talk to a school counselor but were unable to, while 44% said they have not experienced this problem. This means that they have not experienced this problem. This means that more than half of the students surveyed struggled to access counseling support when they needed it.

**WHAT DOES THIS MATTER?**

This matters because students who cannot access support may continue struggling with stress, anxiety, or other mental health challenges without help. The data suggests that ACHS may need more counselors or easier ways students to receive support

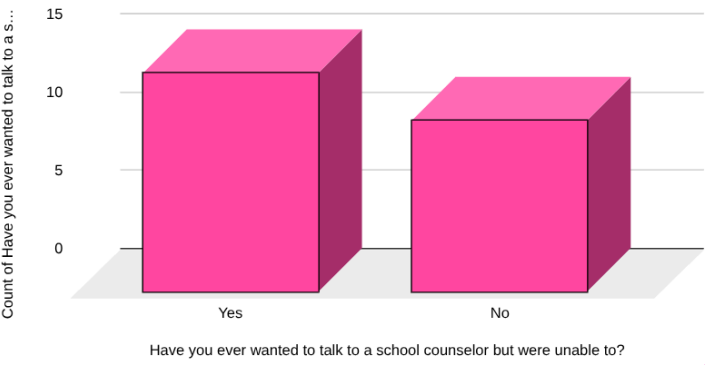
**WHAT DOES THE DATE SHOW?**

The graph shows that 40% of students believe ACHS does not have enough access to school counselors, while 36% said yes and 24% were unsure. This means that the largest group of students feels that counselor access is not fully meeting student needs.

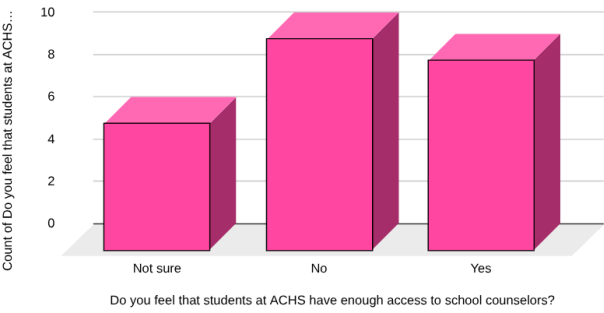
**WHAT DOES THIS MATTER?**

This matters because students who feel they cannot access counselors easily may not receive support when they are struggling with stress or mental health challenges. The data shows that many students believe ACHS should improve access to counseling service

Count of Have you ever wanted to talk to a school counselor but were unable to?



Count of Do you feel that students at ACHS have enough access to school counselors?



WHAT HAS ALREADY BEEN TRIED?

ACHS already provides school counselors, student support services, and mental health awareness programs for students. Students are able to schedule meetings with counselors during the school day, and the school provides resources for students who may be struggling emotionally or academically. ACPS has also worked to increase awareness about student mental health and provide support programs for students.

WHO CAN HELP?

Stakeholder 1 — Mr. Lance Harrell (Principal)  
Mr. Harrell can help by supporting policy changes, increasing awareness about student mental health, and helping the school hire more counselors or expand mental health programs.

Stakeholder 2 — School Counselors  
School counselors can help by providing emotional support, guidance, and mental health resources for students. They can also share information about the challenges students face and suggest improvements for counseling services.

Stakeholder 3 — Alexandria City Public Schools (ACPS)  
ACPS can help by providing funding for additional counselors, improving mental health programs, and creating district-wide policies that support student well-being.

WHAT HAS BEEN DONE SO FAR?

Quantity: ACHS currently has school counselors, mental health support services, and student wellness programs available. Students are able to meet with counselors during the school day and participate in mental health awareness activities.

Quality: Although these resources exist, survey data showed that many students still feel stressed frequently and believe there are not enough counselors available. This suggests that the current support systems are helping some students, but they are not fully meeting the needs of the student population.

IS IT ACTUALLY HELPING?

The actions taken so far are helping somewhat because students do have access to counselors and support programs. However, the problem has not been fully solved because many students still report high levels of stress and difficulty accessing support quickly. This shows that ACHS still needs additional counselors and stronger mental health resources to better support students.

WHAT SHOULD CHANGE? (YOUR SOLUTION)

ACHS should hire more school counselors and make mental health support easier for students to access during the school day. The school could also increase mental health awareness programs and create faster ways for students to schedule counseling appointments. Survey data showed that many students feel stressed frequently and believe there are not enough counselors available. Increasing counselor access would help students receive support more quickly and improve student well-being.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN NEXT?

If ACHS increases access to school counselors and mental health support, students will receive help more quickly and feel more supported. Student stress and anxiety may decrease, and students could improve academically, emotionally, and socially. Students, teachers, and the overall school community would benefit from a healthier and safer school environment.

LEARN MORE

Resource 1  
nami.org  
This resource provides information about mental health, student support, and ways schools can improve mental health awareness.

Resource 2  
schoolcounselor.org  
This resource explains the role of school counselors and provides information about recommended counselor-to-student ratios.

CITATIONS

National Alliance on Mental Illness. (2025). Mental health information and resources. NAMI.  
<https://www.nami.org>

American School Counselor Association. (2025). Role of the school counselor. ASCA.  
<https://www.schoolcounselor.org>

[Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. \(2025\). Youth mental health. CDC.](#)