



BY ALEXANDRIA CITY HIGH SCHOOL



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TOPIC

Mental Health and how it affects students.

TOPIC DESCRIPTION

Youth mental health is a serious issue affecting many students in Alexandria City Public Schools (ACPS). Many students struggle with stress, anxiety, depression, and pressure from academics, sports, jobs, and personal life. These mental health challenges can negatively affect grades, attendance, behavior, and student's overall well-being. Some students also stay quiet about their struggles because they feel embarrassed or believe adults will not understand them. This issue matters at ACHS and in Alexandria because students who do not receive support may turn to unhealthy coping methods such as substance abuse or isolation. Improving mental health support can help students feel safer, healthier, and more successful in school.

BASELINE DATA & GOAL

31% of students in Alexandria reported feeling hopeless or sad for two or more weeks, showing that mental health is a serious issue affecting many youth in the community.

The Goal is to reduce the percentage of students experiencing hopelessness and sadness from 31% to 20% by increasing mental health support, awareness, and access to school resources.

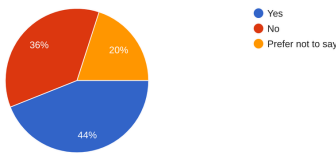
CYCP GOAL & STRATEGIC AREA

This issue connects to the CYCP goal of improving youth health and well-being. Mental health challenges such as stress, anxiety, depression, and substance abuse directly affect students' safety, academic success, and overall quality of life. Improving mental health creates a stronger community.

WHAT IS HAPPENING RIGHT NOW?

Have you ever struggled with mental health issues, such as stress, anxiety, or depression?

25 responses



Why does it matter?

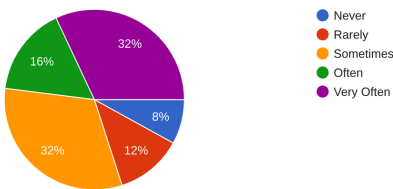
This matters because it shows mental health challenges are not rare, they are affecting a large portion of students in the school community.

What does the data show?

The data shows that almost half of ACPS students have struggled with mental health issues such as stress, anxiety, or depression.

How often do you feel stressed because of school?

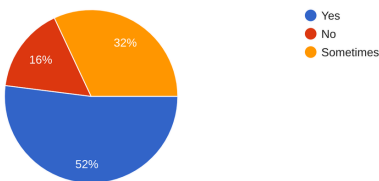
25 responses



The data shows that most students experience school-related stress frequently, with only a small number of students saying they rarely or never feel stressed.

Have mental health struggles ever affected your grades or attendance?

25 responses



The data shows that a majority of students say mental health struggles have affected their grades or attendance in some way.

This matters because high levels of stress can negatively affect students' mental health, focus, and academic performance.

ACPS currently addresses mental health through school counselors, student support teams, and wellness resources available in schools. Some schools also provide social emotional learning programs and access to mental health staff. Based on the survey data, students still experience stress and do not feel fully supported.

WHAT HAS ALREADY BEEN TRIED?

ACPS and the City of Alexandria have already tried several strategies to address youth mental health. Schools provide counselors, psychologists, and student support teams to help students with stress, emotional challenges, and academic pressure. They also use social emotional learning programs to teach students coping skills and emotional awareness. The city and community organizations also offer mental health resources, prevention programs, and support services for youth and families.

WHO CAN HELP?

Stakeholder 1: Community organizations like RAISE and behavioral health services can help by providing additional mental health programs, therapy services, and outreach to students and families.
Stakeholder 2: School counselors and student support staff can help by providing direct mental health support to students, offering counseling sessions, and identifying students who struggle.



WHAT HAS BEEN DONE SO FAR?

What has been done so far (quantity actions taken)

Acps has implemented several supports to address student mental health, including school counselors, student support teams, and social emotional learning (SEL) programs. Schools also provide access to mental health resources and connect students to outside community organizations for additional help.

How well are these actions working? (Quality)

These actions are helping some students, but the data shows they are not fully effective.

Many students still report high levels of stress, with 44% experiencing mental health struggles and 52% saying their mental health has affected their grades or attendance. This shows that while support exists, it is not reaching all students.

IS IT ACTUALLY HELPING?

The actions taken by ACPS are helping some students, but they are not fully solving the problem. While support systems like counselors and SEL programs exist, the data shows that many students are still struggling. For example, 44% of students reported experiencing mental health issues, 52% said their mental health affected their grades or attendance, and 32% feel very often stressed because of school. This shows that students are not significantly better off yet, since a large number are still experiencing stress and academic impact. Overall, the current efforts are helpful but not strong enough.

WHAT SHOULD CHANGE? (YOUR SOLUTION)

ACPS should expand and strengthen mental health support in schools by increasing the number of school counselors and adding regular mental health wellness check-ins during the school day. Based on the survey, 53.8% of students said they struggle with mental health, and 61.5% said it has affected their grades or attendance, showing that academic success is being directly impacted. Since 53.8% of students also said they do not feel comfortable talking to someone at school, schools should also focus on reducing stigma by creating safe spaces and normalizing mental health conversations. Advisory periods or weekly check-ins could help students talk about stress before it becomes overwhelming.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN NEXT?

If this solution is implemented, students would feel more comfortable seeking help when needed. Kids will ask for more help! Grades will get better!

CITATIONS

City of Alexandria. Youth Needs assessment report.
<https://www.alexandriava.gov>

Virginia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services. (n.d). Youth mental health services.
<https://dbhds.virginia.gov>

LEARN MORE

Virginia Dept of Behavioral health. This organization provides mental health programs in Virginia.
City of Alexandria Youth Needs assessment. This report provides data on youth mental health, substance use, and well-being in Alexandria