



National Center for HIV/AIDS, Viral Hepatitis, STD, and TB Prevention

The Federal Perspective on Adolescent Mental Health and the Value of Schools

Kathleen Ethier, PhD, Director
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention,
Division of Adolescent and School Health



U.S. Department of
Health and Human Services
Centers for Disease
Control and Prevention



Who We Are, What We Do

CDC Strives to Help Youth Be Healthy and Successful



We envision a future where all youth in the U.S. will be equipped with the knowledge, skills, and resources for a healthy adolescence and adulthood.





- **School District Support**

- School district-based approach to improve primary prevention of HIV, other STDs, and teen pregnancy through the prevention of behaviors and experiences that place youth at risk

- **Research and Applied Evaluation**

- Monitoring and evaluation of district programs as well as tool development and investigation of emerging issues and solutions

- **Surveillance**


- School-based surveillance of youth behaviors and experiences and school policies and practices



The Mental Health of Youth in the U.S. Is Moving in the Wrong Direction

The Percentage of Students Who Experience Distress and Suicidality Is Increasing



THE PERCENTAGE OF HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS WHO:	2007 Total	2009 Total	2011 Total	2013 Total	2015 Total	2017 Total	Trend
Experienced persistent feelings of sadness or hopelessness	28.5	26.1	28.5	29.9	29.9	31.5	
Seriously considered attempting suicide	14.5	13.8	15.8	17.0	17.7	17.2	
Made a suicide plan	11.3	10.9	12.8	13.6	14.6	13.6	
Attempted suicide	6.9	6.3	7.8	8.0	8.6	7.4	
Were injured in a suicide attempt	2.0	1.9	2.4	2.7	2.8	2.4	

For the complete wording of YRBS questions, refer to Appendix. Source: National Youth Risk Behavior Surveys, 2007-2017

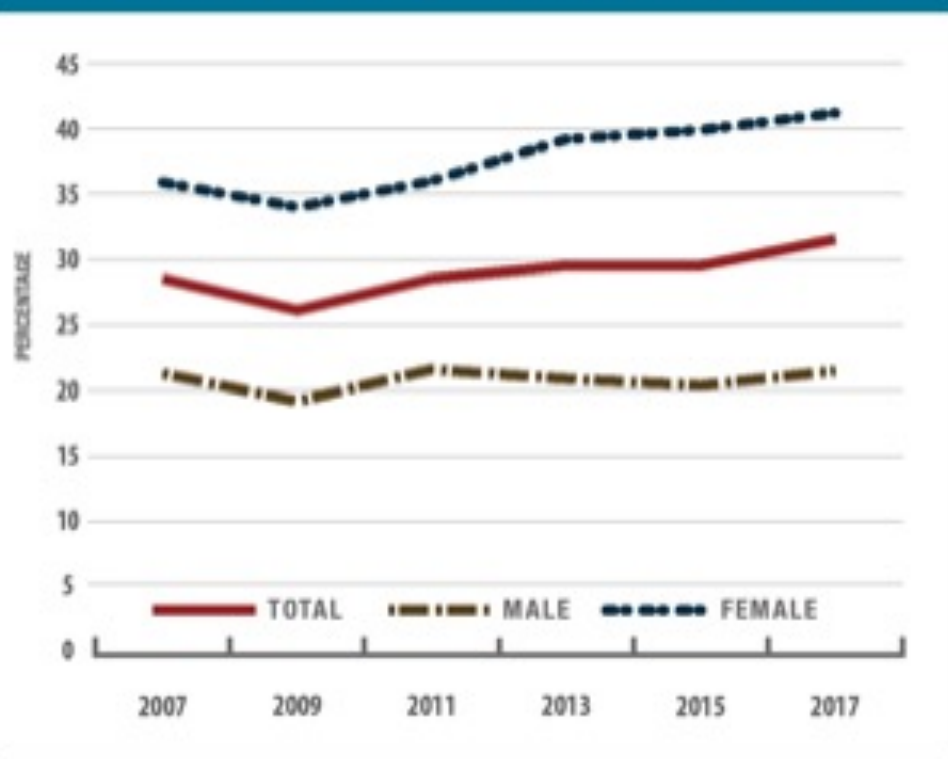
LEGEND



Female Students Are at Increasing Levels of Distress



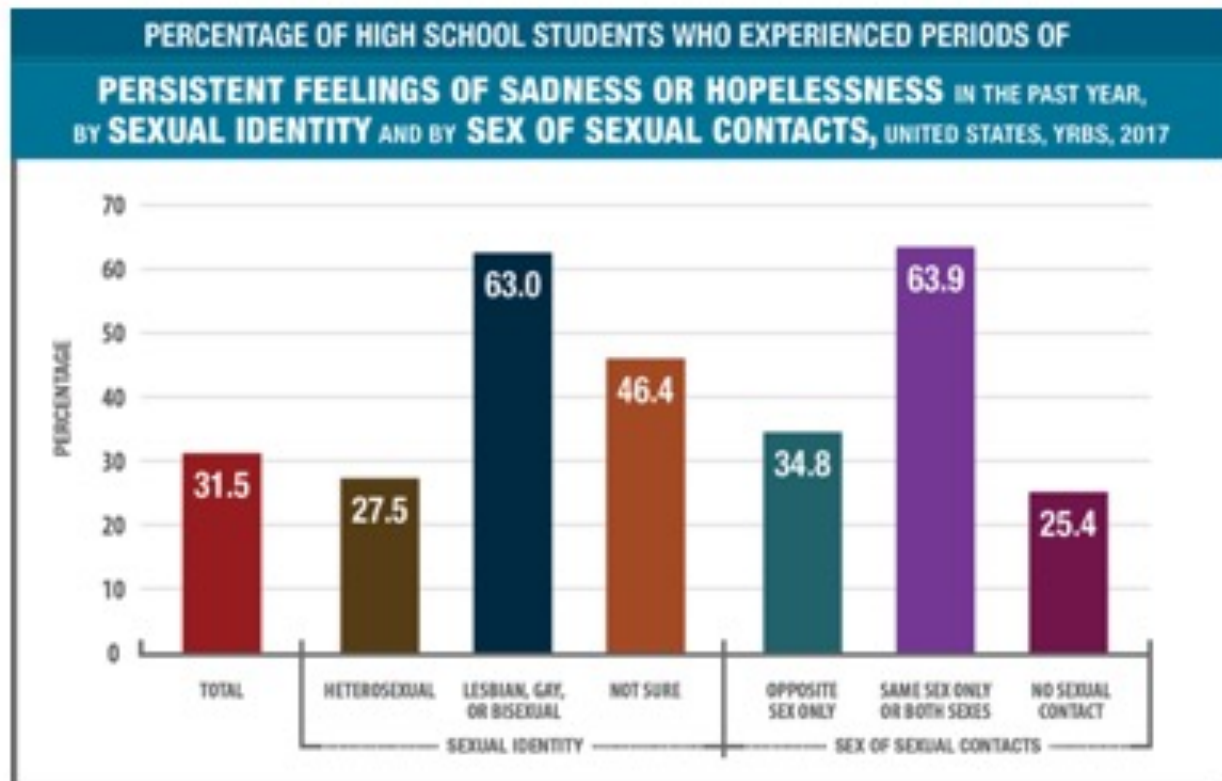
PERCENTAGE OF HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS WHO EXPERIENCED PERIODS OF
PERSISTENT FEELINGS OF SADNESS OR HOPELESSNESS
IN THE PAST YEAR, BY **SEX**, UNITED STATES, YRBS, 2007–2017



Source: Youth Risk Behavior Survey Data Summary & Trends Report, 2007–2017

From 2007 to 2017, a significantly greater percentage of **female students** experienced persistent feelings of sadness and hopelessness compared to **male students**

Sexual Minority Youth Experience Disproportionate Rates of Distress

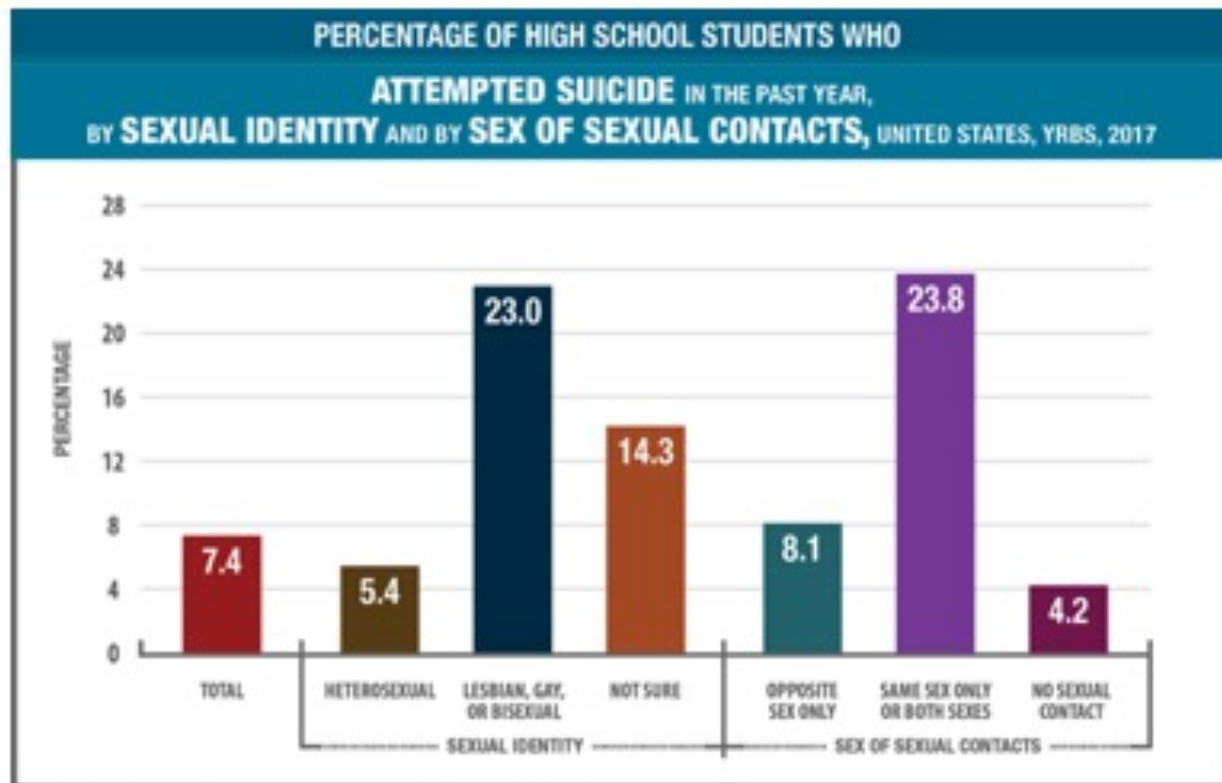


Source: Youth Risk Behavior Survey Data Summary & Trends Report, 2007–2017

Significantly higher percentages of **lesbian, gay, or bisexual** students and students **not sure** of their sexual identity experienced sad or hopeless feelings.

A significantly higher percentage of students who had **sexual contact with only the same sex or both sexes** experienced sad or hopeless feelings.

Sexual Minority Youth Experience Disproportionate Rates of Suicidality



Source: Youth Risk Behavior Survey Data Summary & Trends Report, 2007–2017

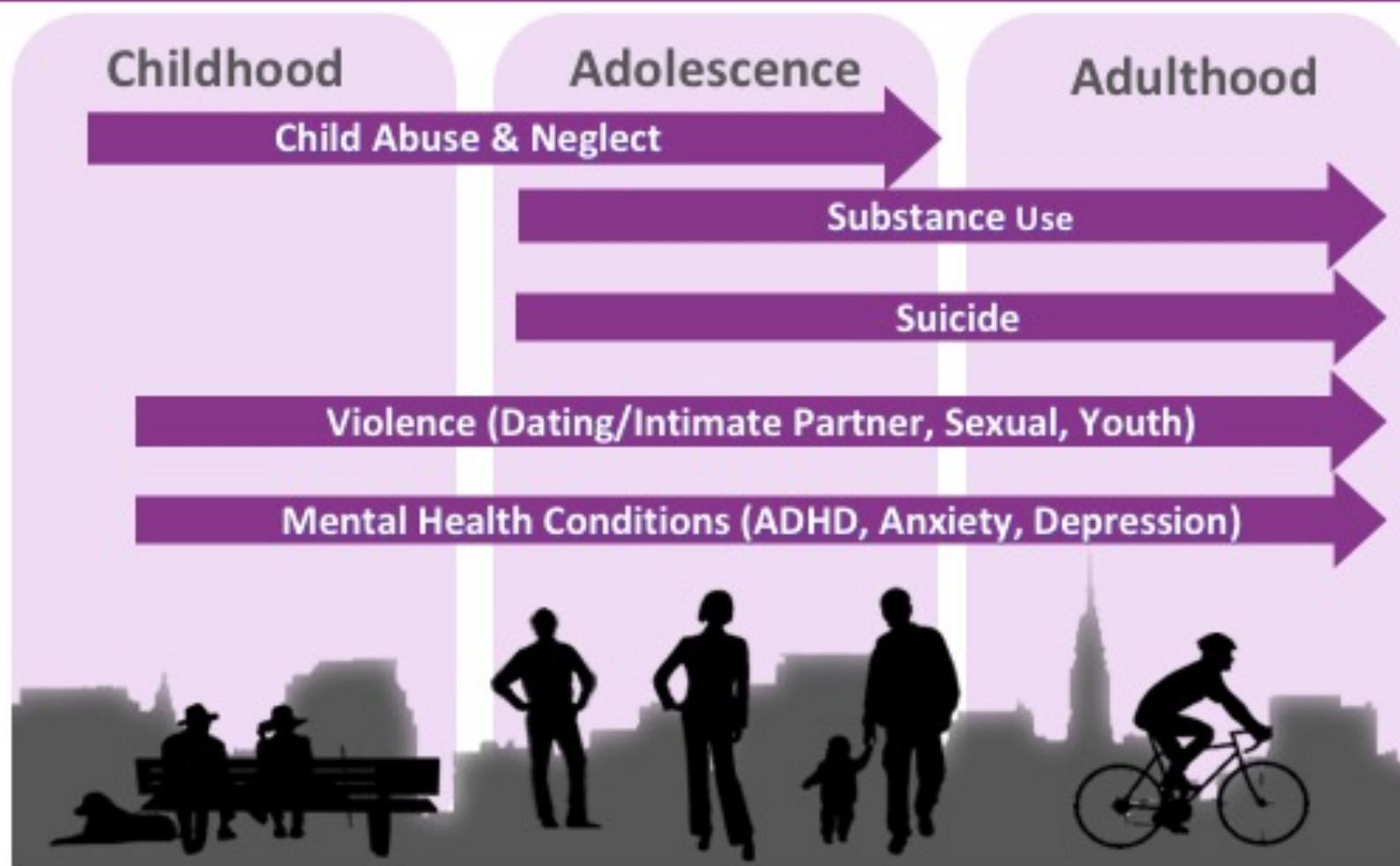
Significantly higher percentages of **lesbian, gay, or bisexual** students and students **not sure** of their sexual identity attempted suicide.

Significantly higher percentages of students who had sexual contact with **only the same sex or both sexes** and students who had sexual contact with **only the opposite sex** attempted suicide.

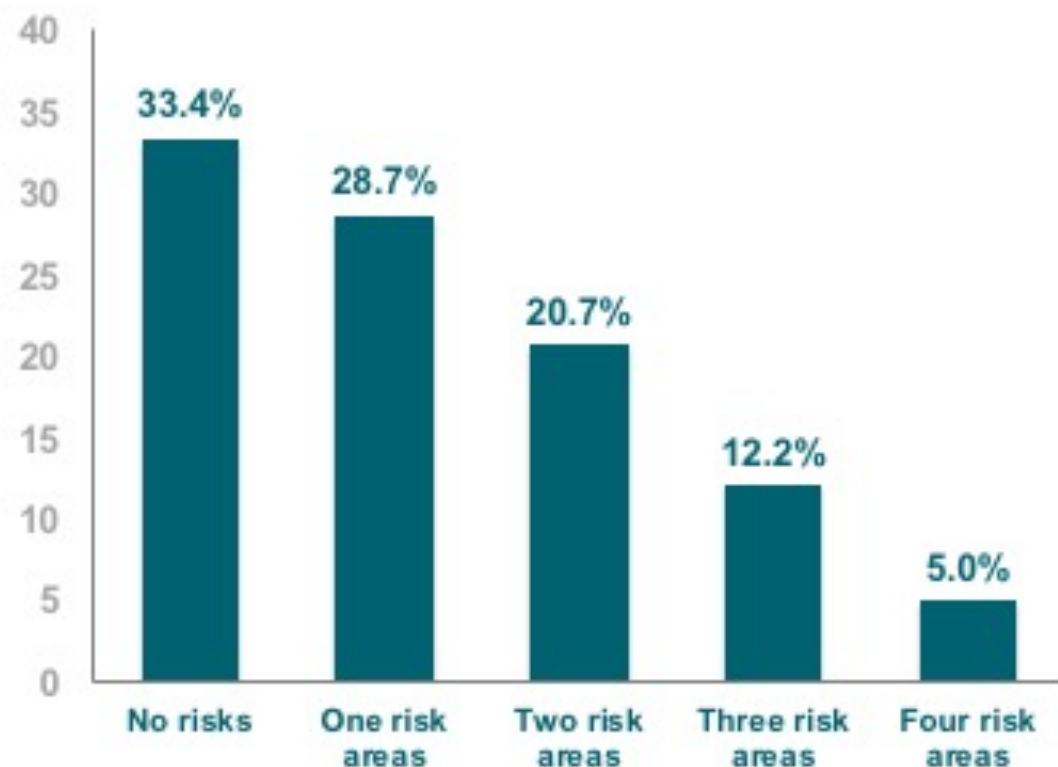


The Effects of Poor Mental Health in Adolescence Are Far-Reaching

Risk Behaviors Cluster in Adolescence



Too Many Adolescents Experience Multiple Risks

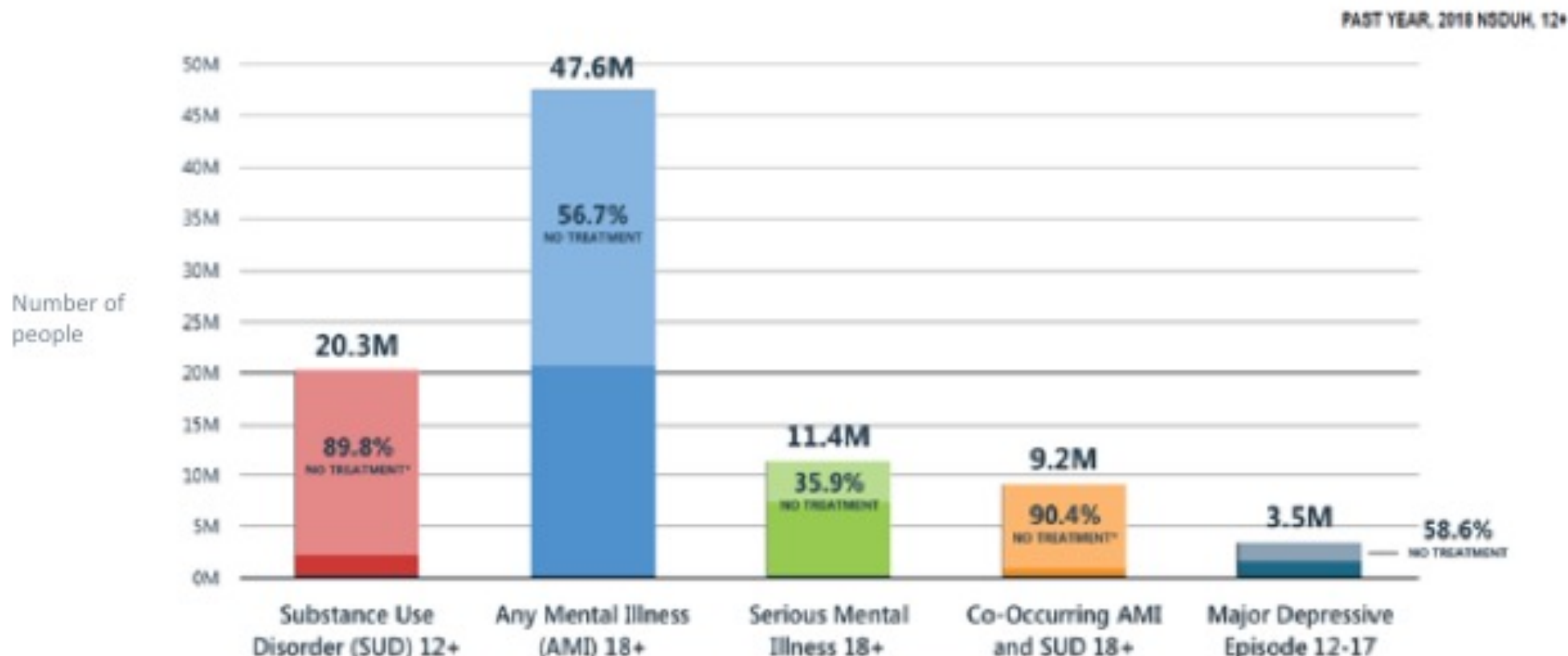


Intersection of Risk Areas

	High-Risk Substance Use*	Violence Victimization	Mental Health
Violence Victimization	12.5%		
Mental Health	12.7%	23.8%	
Sexual Behavior	12.7%	18.3%	17.3%

*High-Risk Substance Use refers to use of illicit substances, injection substances, opioids

Despite Consequences and Disease Burden, Treatment Gaps Remain



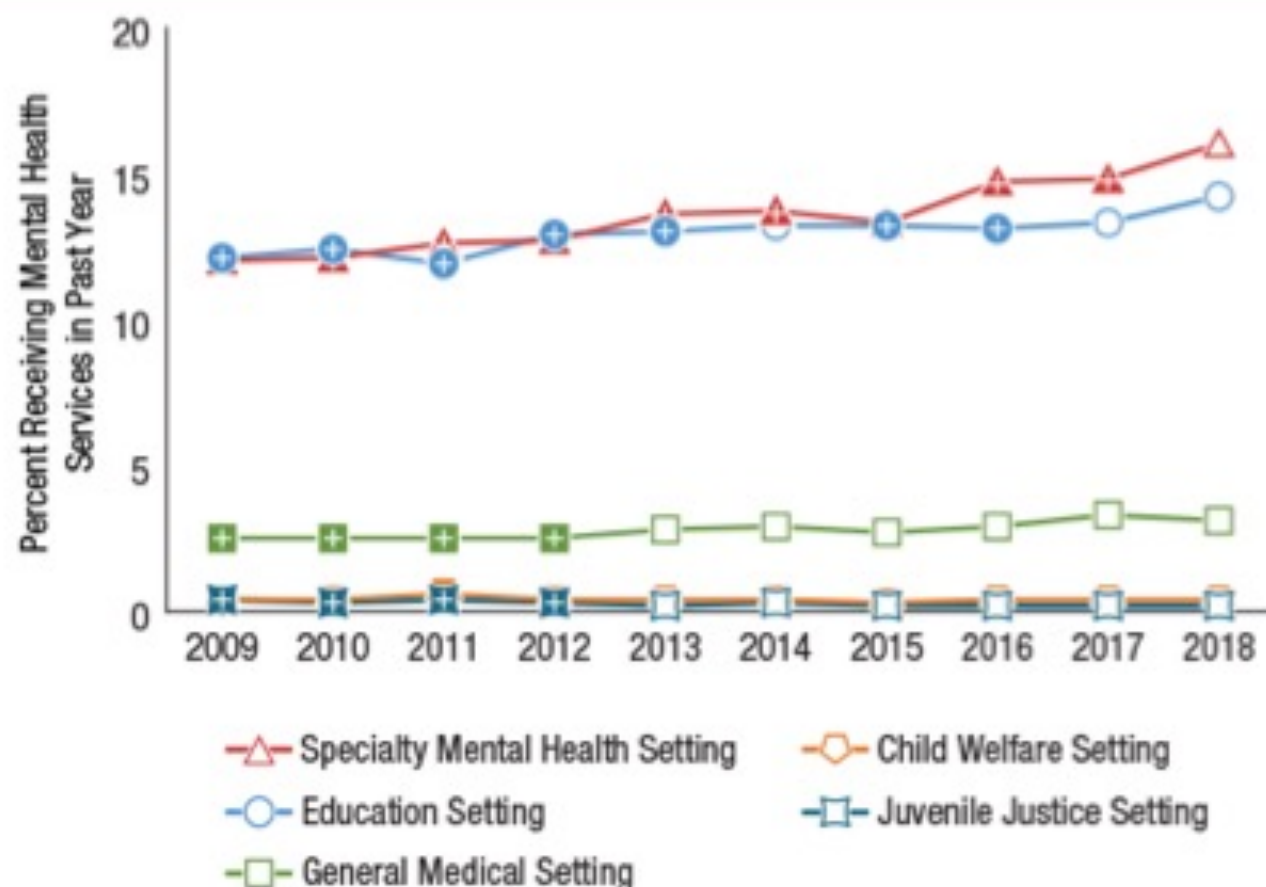
* No Treatment for SUD is defined as not receiving treatment at any location, such as a hospital (inpatient), rehabilitation facility (inpatient or outpatient), mental health center, emergency room, private doctor's office, self-help group, or prison/jail.

SAMHSA
Substance Abuse and Mental Health
Services Administration



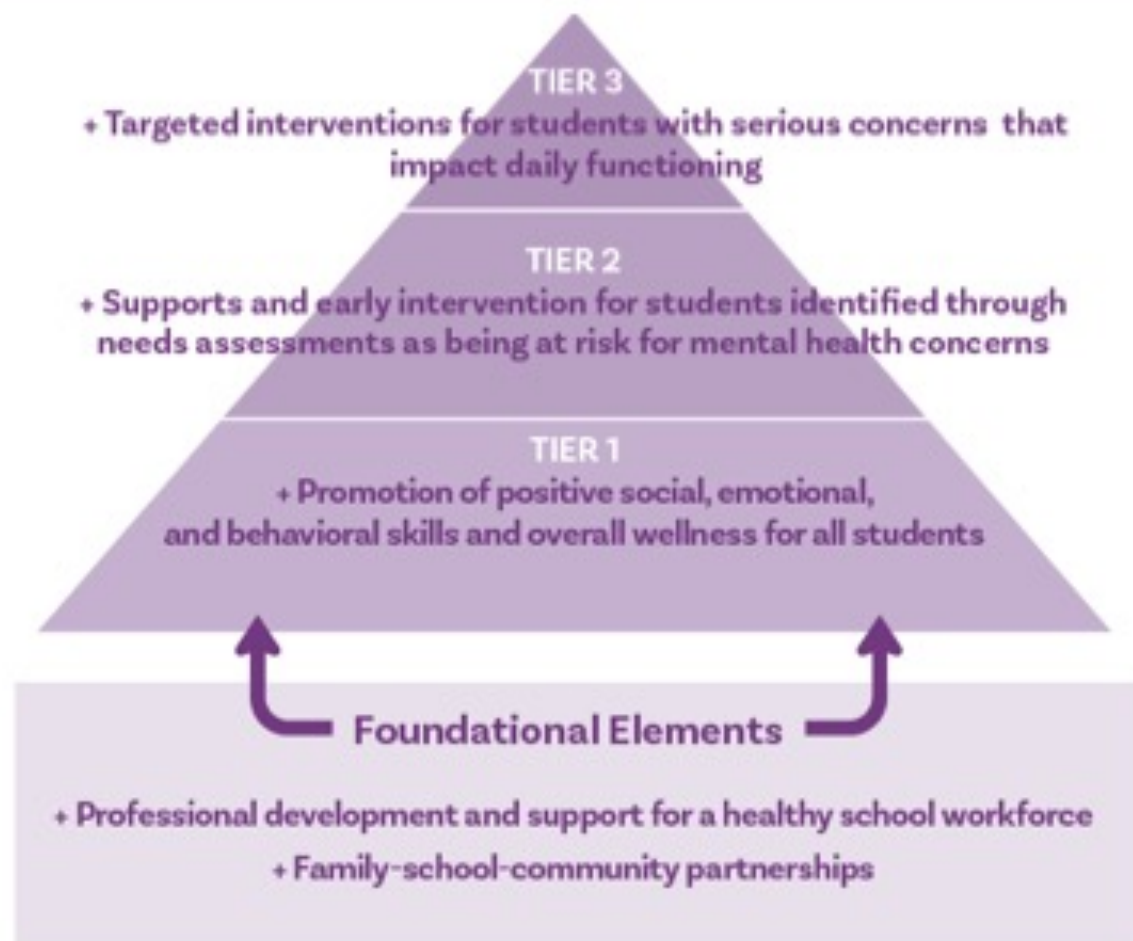
Schools Play a Critical Role in Promoting Adolescent Mental Health

Schools Are A Primary Provider of Mental Health Services



+ Difference between this estimate and the 2018 estimate is statistically significant at the .05 level.

Schools Provide Opportunities for Support





How Can Schools Support All Students?

A black and white photograph of three students in a library. A young man on the left is smiling and pointing at a book. A young woman in the center, wearing glasses and a polka-dot top, is also smiling. A young man on the right is looking at the book. They are all sitting at a table with books and papers. Bookshelves filled with books are in the background.

Health Education

with medically accurate, developmentally appropriate, and culturally inclusive content that builds knowledge and skills needed to promote healthy behaviors and avoid risks.



Health Services

that connect students with non-stigmatizing, confidential, accessible, and youth-friendly health providers.



Safe and Supportive Environments

where students feel engaged in their school life and connected to important adults at school and at home.

Feeling Connected to Family and School Has Long-Lasting Positive Effects on Adolescents Well Into Adulthood

Strong connections to
FAMILY and SCHOOL

Can lead to decreases in

PHYSICAL
VIOLENCE



MULTIPLE
SEX PARTNERS



RX
MISUSE



EMOTIONAL
DISTRESS



STD
INFECTION



ILLICIT
DRUG USE



Activities That Increase School Connectedness



Professional Development

Providing professional development on classroom management techniques, and policies and practices that support youth

Youth Development Programs

Implementing school-based positive youth development programs, or connecting students to programs in their community

Student Led Clubs

Establishing and enhancing student-led clubs that support LGBTQ youth

Sharing Resources

Sharing resources with families about positive parenting practices

School-Based Primary Prevention Is Effective and Valuable


School-Based Primary Prevention Programs Increase School Connectedness



School connectedness interventions:

- Family/community mentoring programs
- Service learning opportunities
- Student-led clubs to provide safe spaces
- Professional development for educators on classroom management





We currently reach about **2 million students** in 28 large school districts at a cost of **less than \$10 per student.**

- Mental health among adolescents is a critical public health issue
- The good news is that we know what works
 - Primary prevention saves lives and money
 - School connectedness improves students outcomes
 - Schools are key to this work
- Our Nation's youth need help, and we have tools to start



For More Information

- Web: www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth
- Twitter: @CDC_DASH
- E-mail: nccddashinfo@cdc.gov
- Telephone: 1-800-CDC-INFO (1-800-232-4636)

The findings and conclusions in this report are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official position of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.



U.S. Department of
Health and Human Services
Centers for Disease
Control and Prevention