

SOME BASE LINE DATA ON SCHOOL MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

(Excerpted from a national survey funded by the
Center for Mental Health Services, SAMHSA, U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services)

As reported in *School Mental Health Services in the United States, 2002–2003*,* the survey topics included: types of mental health problems encountered in school settings; types of mental health services that schools are delivering; numbers and qualifications of school staff

providing mental health services; types of arrangements for delivering mental health services in schools, including collaboration with community-based providers; and major sources of funding for school MH services.

Key Findings as Reported in the Executive Summary

- Nearly three quarters (73 percent) of the schools reported that “social, interpersonal, or family problems” were the most frequent mental health problems for both male and female students.
- For males, aggression or disruptive behavior and behavior problems associated with neurological disorders were the second and third most frequent problems.
- For females, anxiety and adjustment issues were the second and third most frequent problems.
- All students, not just those in special education, were eligible to receive mental health services in the vast majority of schools (87 percent).
- One fifth of students on average received some type of school-supported mental health services in the school year prior to the study.
- Virtually all schools reported having at least one staff member whose responsibilities included providing mental health services to students.
- The most common types of school mental health providers were school counselors, followed by nurses, school psychologists, and social workers. School nurses spent approximately a third of their time providing mental health services.
- More than 80 percent of schools provided assessment for mental health problems, behavior management consultation, and crisis intervention, as well as referrals to specialized programs. A majority also provided individual and group counseling and case management.
- Financial constraints of families and inadequate school mental health resources were the most frequently cited barriers to providing mental health services.
- Almost half of school districts (49 percent) used contracts or other formal agreements with community-based individuals and/or organizations to provide mental health services to students. The most frequently reported community-based provider type was county mental health agencies.
- Districts reported that the most common funding sources for mental health services or interventions were the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), State special education funds, and local funds. In 28 percent of districts, Medicaid was among the top five funding sources for mental health services.
- One third of districts reported that funding for mental health services had decreased since the beginning of the 2000–2001 school year, while over two thirds of districts reported that the need for mental health services increased.
- Sixty percent of districts reported that since the previous year, referrals to community-based providers had increased. One third reported that the availability of outside providers to deliver services to students had decreased.

While survey findings indicate that schools are responding to the mental health needs of their students, they also suggest increasing needs for mental health services and the multiple challenges faced by schools in addressing these needs. Further, more research is needed to explore issues identified by this study, including training of school staff delivering mental health services, adequacy of funding, and effectiveness of specific services delivered in the school setting.

*Foster, S., Rollefson, M., Doksum, T., Noonan, D., Robinson, G., Teich, J. (2005). *School Mental Health Services in the United States, 2002–2003*. DHHS Pub. No. (SMA) 05-4068. Rockville, MD: Center for Mental Health Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.
<http://www.mentalhealth.samhsa.gov/media/ken/pdf/SMA05-4068/SMA05-4068.pdf>