

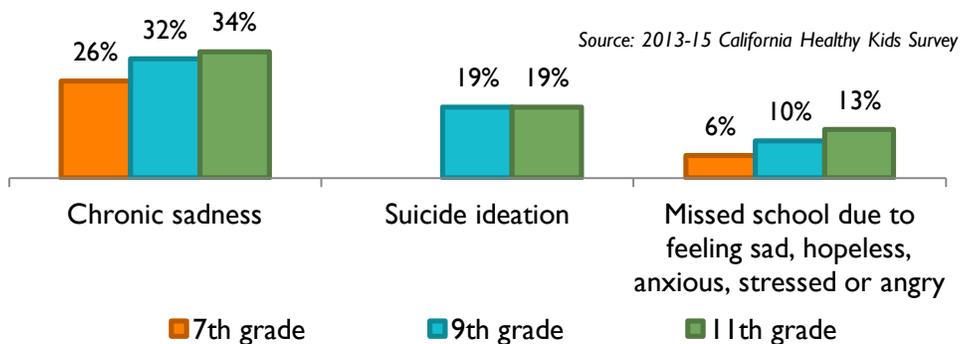
California Students: Behavioral Health Needs

Youth's behavioral health can directly affect their ability to learn and succeed in school and beyond, yet most youth with behavioral health concerns do not receive necessary care. Schools are increasingly being called upon to address students' behavioral health needs. This brief describes the behavioral health needs of California students and describes resources for California schools and districts to address these needs, based on findings from the California Department of Education's Project Cal-Well Mental Health Program.



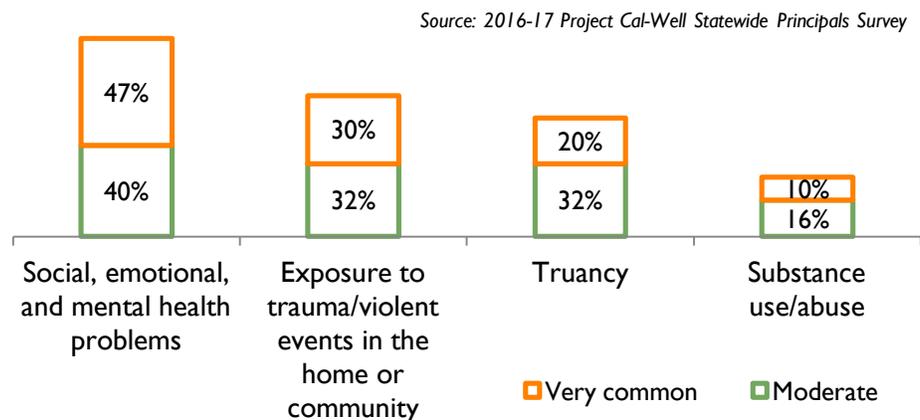
Project Cal-Well is a five-year (2014–19) “Now Is The Time” Project Advancing Wellness and Resilience in Education (NITT-AWARE) grant funded by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). Through the California Department of Education, Project Cal-Well is implementing programs statewide and in partnership with ABC Unified School District, Garden Grove Unified School District, and San Diego County Office of Education.

Statewide data show that as students grow older, the percentage who experience mental health needs increases.



“Mental health issues comprise 90%+ of my discipline issues. Administering consequences for behavior is only a Band-aid to the deeper mental health issues that a number of my students are coping with: anger, trauma, depression, fear -- to name only a few.”
– School Principal

Principals report that student mental health concerns are very common in California schools.



Project Cal-Well data show that most youth know where to get help, yet many are afraid to ask, particularly older youth.

Students' sources of support and willingness to seek help... <small>(Source: 2016-17 California Healthy Kids Survey, Cal-Well Module, Project Cal-Well Schools)</small>	5 th graders "most" or "all" of the time	Secondary "pretty" or "very" much true
I know who to go to for help when I am sad, scared, stressed, or depressed	76%	66%
I have an adult I can talk to about my problems	74%	61%
If someone my age felt sad, stressed or depressed, talking to an adult could help them feel better	89%	51%
If I was sad, stressed or depressed, I would be afraid to ask for help	10%	28%



1 out of 5 students wanted to talk to a counselor, doctor or therapist about feeling sad, scared, or stressed in the past year.

Of these students, 23% of 5th graders and 34% of secondary students were "never" able to get this help when needed.

(Source: 2016-17 California Healthy Kids Survey, Cal-Well Module, Project Cal-Well Schools)

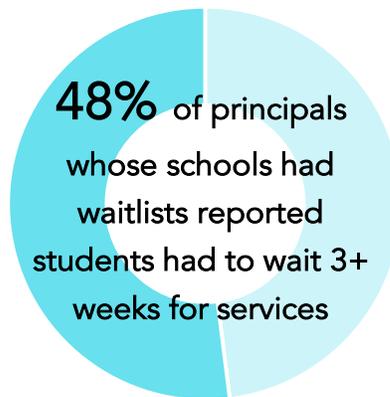
Project Cal-Well data show that older youth are less likely to talk to a teacher or adult at school about their problems. In fact, less than 1 out of 5 would get help from a counselor, doctor or therapist.

What students would do if they felt sad, scared or depressed... <small>(Source: 2016-17 California Healthy Kids Survey, Cal-Well Module, Project Cal-Well Schools)</small>	5 th grade students	Secondary students
Talk to their friends	66%	69%
Talk to someone in their family	72%	42%
Not know what to do	10%	23%
Talk to a teacher or another adult at school	54%	17%
Get help from a counselor, doctor or therapist	19%	13%

California principals reported barriers to providing school-based mental health services.



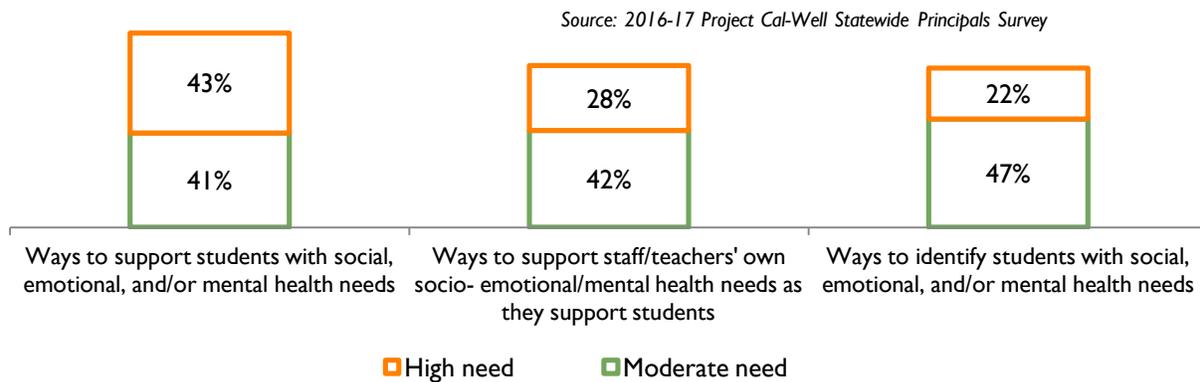
1 out of 3 principals reported their schools had a waitlist for mental health services



The two most commonly reported barriers to service provision were:

- Lack of funding (58%)
- Lack of providers (42%)

California principals also reported a high need for school staff professional development or training to better support students, as well as their own mental health needs.



Implications for California schools

As the data in this brief show, students in California schools have behavioral health concerns that schools are struggling to address. Project Cal-Well can serve as a model for schools. First, school wide interventions can work to prevent the development of problem behaviors by creating positive school climates that promote healthy social-emotional development and well-being for ALL students. Professional development for school staff can also help them to identify and refer students in need to support services. Second, targeted interventions can provide focused services to students who are at risk for behavioral health concerns. Finally, more intensive, individualized services for students with significant needs can be provided through strong partnerships with community mental health providers. Additional detail on Project Cal-Well's successful strategies can be found here: <https://healthpolicy.ucsf.edu/school-health-services-evaluation#currentprojects>

Data collection is also vital for schools to document student needs and to inform the development of strategies to address these needs. Resources for schools and districts include:

- The *California Healthy Kids Survey (CHKS)*: A series of surveys developed by the California Department of Education to assess school climate, safety, and students' well being: <http://chks.wested.org/>. The *CHKS Cal-Well Module (Elementary and Secondary)* was developed for the Project Cal-Well evaluation specifically to assess students' mental health needs, perceptions of stigma, and access and barriers to care: <https://www.cde.ca.gov/ls/cg/mh/projectcalwell.asp>
- The *Project Cal-Well Statewide Principal Survey*: This survey was developed by CDE and the Project Cal-Well evaluators to assess principals' perceptions of students' mental health needs, the availability of existing mental health services, and barriers to service provision. The 2016-17 Statewide Principal Survey Summary Report is available from: <https://healthpolicy.ucsf.edu/school-health-services-evaluation#currentprojects>
- The *State of Mental Health in America 2018*: A valuable resource of facts and figures on mental health across the country: <http://www.mentalhealthamerica.net/issues/state-mental-health-america>

The Statewide Principals Survey was completed by 1,376 school principals, representing 14% of California public schools. Thus, the data are not necessarily representative of all California schools. Similarly, Project Cal-Well CHKS Custom Module results are representative of students in the Project Cal-Well school districts and not necessarily all California students.

This brief was produced by the California Department of Education and the Project Cal-Well evaluators from the University of California, San Francisco, Philip R. Lee Institute for Health Policy Studies, School Health Services Research and Evaluation Team (<http://healthpolicy.ucsf.edu/school-health-services-evaluation>) with funding from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMSHA) [Award #5H79SM061895]. The content is solely the responsibility of the authors and does not necessarily represent the official views of SAMSHA.

