

Student Mental Health Program

Training and Technical Assistance for California Community Colleges



Student Mental Health: An Important Element of Student Success

Both colleges and students are reporting an increasing demand for student mental health services. More students are entering college with mental health diagnoses and psychotropic medication needs; more students are accessing mental health services on campus; and more students are presenting with serious psychological issues than in years past. However, in this time of reduced financial support for higher education, mental health services are sometimes seen as a luxury that campuses cannot afford. But student mental health services are not only needed to support the psychological well being of students, they are also an important part of academic success and retention.

Academic Success

- The American College Health Association survey finds strong evidence that mental health needs are related to measures of academic success. The survey found that students who reported psychological distress also reporting receiving a lower grade on an exam or an important project; receiving a lower grade in the course; receiving an incomplete or dropped the course; or experiencing a significant disruption in thesis, dissertation, research, or practicum work.

Alcohol use	3.8%	Homesickness	4.1%
Anxiety	18.6%	Internet use/computer games	12.7%
ADHD	4.3%	Relationship difficulties	9.8%
Concern for a troubled friend or family member	10.5%	Roommate difficulties	5.0%
Death of a friend or family member	5.3%	Sleep difficulties	20.0%
Depression	11.1%	Stress	27.8%

- Students with high levels of psychological distress are less academically successful: they have more test anxiety, lower academic self efficacy, and less effective time management and use of study resources (Brackney and Karabenick, 1995).
- Students with higher levels of psychological distress have more difficulty concentrating on their schoolwork; they are less likely to persist when faced with distraction or difficulty. (Brackney and Karabenick 1995).
- Students who experience mild or moderate symptoms of depression or anxiety also demonstrate more academic difficulties and lower GPA than non-depressed students (Locke, 2009; Deroma, Leach, and Leverett, 2009)
- Students who receive treatment for depression report substantial gains in academic performance: 31% of students at one university receiving treatment for depression reported an increase in satisfaction with their ability to study/work and 34% of students reported an increased sense of satisfaction with how much schoolwork they can do (Klein, 2010)

- Among a survey of California Community Colleges, mental health issues affected academic performance. Depression, anxiety, and seasonal affective disorder resulted in lower grades on an exam for 6% of respondents, a lower course grade for 4%, and incompletes/drops for 3% (Trieu, Bratton, and Perelli, 2007).
- Santa Rosa Junior College students who had accessed individual counseling services were more than twice as likely to get their degree or certificate than the district average (Unpublished report, 2013).
- Substance use disorders are strongly associated with lower GPA (Svanum and Zody, 2001).

Student Retention

- 5% of college students prematurely end their education due to psychiatric disorders (Kessler, Foster, Saunders, and Sang, 1995).
- Psychological adjustment predicts retention as well or better than academic adjustment (Gerdes and Mallinckrodt, 1994).
- A University of Idaho study found that 77% of students who had received counseling through the health center reported that they were more likely to stay in school because of counseling, and that their school performance would have declined without counseling.
- A study found that students who receive at least 6 counseling sessions have higher retention rates than students who request but do not receive counseling (Wilson et al, 1997).
- A five year longitudinal study found that the retention rate for students who received psychological counseling was 85%, compared with 74% for the general student body (Turner and Berry, 2000).

Citations:

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