

## Data Trends

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**From:** Data Trends  
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This News brief alerts you to the following report: 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. Retrieved from <http://www.mentalhealth.samhsa.gov/media/ken/pdf/SMA05-4068/SMA05-4068.pdf>

(From the Executive Summary) The current study...provides the first national survey of mental health services in a representative sample of the approximately 83,000 public elementary, middle, and high schools and their associated school districts in the United States. The purpose of the study was to identify: (a) The mental health problems most frequently encountered in the U.S. public school setting and the mental health services delivered; (b) The administrative arrangements for the delivery and coordination of mental health services in schools; (c) The types and qualifications of staff providing mental health services in schools; and (d) Issues related to funding, budgeting and resource allocation, and use of data regarding mental health services.

Key Findings include:

- (1) 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.
- (2) For males, aggression or disruptive behavior and behavior problems associated with neurological disorders were the second and third most frequent problems.
- (3) For females, anxiety and adjustment issues were the second and third most frequent problems.
- (4) All students, not just those in special education, were eligible to receive mental health services in the vast majority of schools (87 percent).
- (5) One fifth of students on average received some type of school-supported mental health services in the school year prior to the study.
- (6) Virtually all schools reported having at least one staff member whose responsibilities included providing mental health services to students.
- (7) 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.
- (8) 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.
- (9) Financial constraints of families and inadequate school mental health resources were the most frequently cited barriers to providing mental health services.
- (10) 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.

(11) 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.

(12) 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.

(13) 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.

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Data Trends are produced by the Research and Training Center for Children's Mental Health, Louis de la Parte Florida Mental Health Institute, University of South Florida, Tampa. Data Trends are funded by the Center for Mental Health Services, SAMHSA, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. There are two Data Trends products: 1) Summaries (ISSN# 1537-0399), which detail recent, published articles on systems of care for children with emotional and behavioral disabilities and their families, and; 2) News briefs (ISSN# 1537-0402), which highlight related items or events of interest to the field.