

Schools may help close gap to mental health services for adolescents with mental disorders

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A study published in the May 2013 issue of the *Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry* found that mental health resources provided by schools are significantly associated with whether adolescents with mental disorders receive needed mental health services. In particular, adolescents with disorders attending schools that engage in early identification of emotional problems, are significantly more likely to receive mental health services.

Using data from the National Comorbidity Survey Replication Adolescent Supplement (NCS-A), a group of researchers led by Dr. Jennifer Greif Green, of Boston University's School of Education, examined data from 4,445 interviews with adolescents aged 13-18 and their parents. Adolescents attended 227 schools where principals and mental health coordinators provided information about school mental health resources. The authors examined the types of mental health resources schools provided (such as, counseling, [prevention programs](#), early identification activities, and collaboration with families) and the ratio of students-to-[mental health professionals](#) to predict service use among youth with disorders.

Study findings indicate that fewer than half (45%) of adolescents with a 12-month disorder received [mental health services](#) in the past year and the majority of those received services in school (56%). School provision of early identification resources, in particular, was associated with increased likelihood that students with early or mild disorders received services. The ratio of students-to-mental health providers was not significantly associated with whether youth receive mental health services. The authors argue that these findings suggest that the sheer number of mental health service providers in a school may be less important in facilitating initial service contact than

the types of [mental health resources](#) provided.

Green said of the study, "Schools play a critical role in early identification and referral for adolescents with mental disorders. Our findings support the importance of ensuring that school [mental health providers](#) have the time and resources to engage in proactive early identification and outreach activities."

More information: The article "School Mental Health Resources and Adolescent Mental Health Service Use" by Jennifer Greif Green, Katie A. McLaughlin, Margarita Alegría, E.Jane Costello, Michael J. Gruber, Kimberly Hoagwood, Philip J. Leaf, Serene Olin, Nancy A. Sampson, Ronald C. Kessler, ([dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.jaac.2013.03.002](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jaac.2013.03.002)) appears in the *Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry*, Volume 52, Issue 5 (May 2013)

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