



Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration  
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An Agency of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

## **SAMHSA** **News Release**

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### **SAMHSA RELEASES FIRST NATIONAL SURVEY OF SCHOOL MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES**

One-fifth of students receive some type of school-supported mental health services during the school year, according to a new national survey released today by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). Elementary, middle, and high schools all cite social, interpersonal, or family problems as the most frequent mental health problems for students.

Mental health problems are broadly defined in the new publication, *School Mental Health Services in the United States, 2002-2003*, covering a spectrum of concerns, from relatively mild, commonly seen problems such as difficulty adjusting to a new school, to more significant behavior problems such as bullying, to serious psychiatric and developmental disorders. Mental health services were defined as those services and supports delivered to individual students who have been referred and identified as having psychosocial or mental health problems.

“Taking action to address childhood mental health problems now can save lives, especially when school personnel work with parents to identify children and intervene appropriately before they develop significant problems,” said SAMHSA Administrator Charles Curie. “This new survey shows schools are responding to the mental health needs of their students and provides new information on how these services are organized, staffed, funded and coordinated.”

Topics explored in the survey report include 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.

#### Findings include:

- 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.

The report 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.

Copies can be obtained, free of charge, from SAMHSA's National Mental Health Information Center at 1-800-789-2647, or on the web at <http://store.mentalhealth.org/cmhs/ManagedCare/pubs.aspx>.

*SAMHSA, a public health agency within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, is the lead federal agency for improving the quality and availability of substance abuse prevention, addiction treatment and mental health services in the United States.*