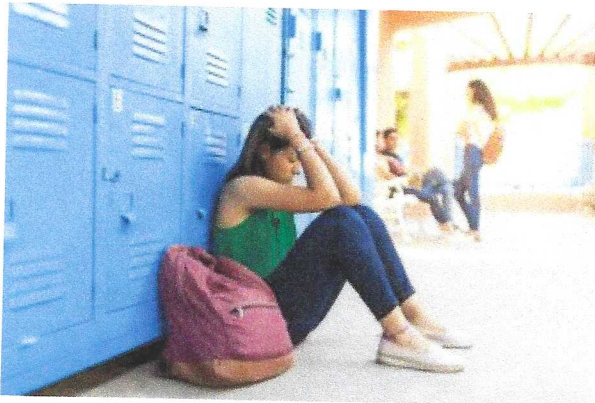


# SuperEval Blog

## Make Mental Health a Priority for Staff and Students (<https://supereval.com/blog/make-mental-health-a-priority-for-staff-and-students/>)

October 10th, 2019



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[content/uploads/2019/10/AdobeStock\\_270828810.jpeg](https://supereval.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/AdobeStock_270828810.jpeg)) Suicide. Bullying. School violence. Devastatingly, as unpleasant as they are to think about, these are things we must consider in today's educational landscape.

According to the Child Mind Institute (<https://childmind.org/2015-childrens-mental-health-report/>), of the 74.5 million children in the U.S, approximately 17.1 million have or have had a psychiatric disorder. This number is more than the number of children with cancer, diabetes, and AIDS combined. Relative to adults, according to Starling (<https://www.starlingminds.com/the-state-of-mental-health-in-us-educators/>), there are 3.2 million full-time equivalent K-12 teachers in the U.S. A 2017 study revealed that 1.86 million of them describe their mental health as "not good," with 61 percent reporting that they "always" or "often" felt high-stress over a period of 30-days.

School leaders cannot afford to dismiss the realities of mental health in America and its impact on our schools. The good news is that there are steps you can take to create a safe environment in your school so that those suffering from depression, anxiety, bullying, and isolation can feel comfortable asking for help and obtaining care.

## How to Support Teachers with Mental Health Needs

1. **Ensure Teachers are Taking Time Off.** Depending on any applicable labor union contracts, give your teachers ample vacation and sick time, and that you create a culture that encourages them to take time when needed. Too often, employees resist taking time off out of a worry that their supervisor or co-workers will judge them negatively. Provide regular reminders for teachers to take time off via email and at staff meetings. Also, make taking time off stress-free for teachers by helping them obtain classroom coverage and putting processes in place to help substitutes keep learning objectives moving forward teachers' absence.

2. **Enable Mental and Physical Wellness.** Build wellness into your school culture. Encourage teachers to walk in a group on their lunch break, rather than staying in their classroom. Consider partnering with local yoga and fitness studios to obtain discounts on available classes or bring instructors into the school for faculty and staff-only sessions on staff development days or before/after the school day. By making it easy for teachers to prioritize their health, they will be more likely to take the much-needed breaks throughout the day that they need for stress and tension reduction.
3. **Maintain Open Dialogue.** Encourage your principals and staff supervisors to regularly check-in with faculty and staff and ask them about concerns, points-of-stress, and areas in which they need support. Simply asking the question, "How are you feeling?" can be the impetus required to allow someone to admit that they are suffering and ask for help.
4. **Share Available Resources.** Too often, people fail to seek help because they are unaware of available support services. Make sure your faculty and staff know about convenient school and local resources. Beyond fitness and wellness centers, these may include licensed mental health providers, substance use disorder recovery centers, and counseling centers that are covered by the district's benefit plan.

## How to Support Students with Mental Health Needs

1. **Train Faculty and Staff to Spot the Signs of a Mental Health Disorder.** Teachers spend several hours a day with students, and in some cases, they may be better equipped than family and friends to spot the signs of depression, anxiety, substance use disorder, and other mental health disorders. Bring in external experts for annual training and educate faculty and staff to look for key indicators of emotional wellness problems. Also, give your employees an avenue to seek services for students in need through the school, such as enabling access to school counselors, and sharing concerns with parents.
2. **Commit to a Culture of Acceptance.** Kids who are bullied are at risk of suffering from depression, anxiety, feelings of sadness, isolation, changes in sleep and eating patterns, and loss of interest in activities. Break the link between bullying and mental health illness by creating a formal policy against bullying in your school. October is National Bullying Prevention Month, which means now is an ideal time to gather momentum in your district to redefine how your school addresses reported cases of bullying and cyberbullying and creating a culture of tolerance and acceptance.
3. **Maintain Open Dialogue with Parents.** Parents need to know that your school is committed to fostering a safe and supportive environment for its students. On the aggregate, share with parents the initiatives that your district is taking to support faculty, staff, and students. You may also want to bring in experts and guest speakers to deliver presentations to parents on various topics surrounding mental health and substance use disorders. Additionally, you may want to provide resources to parents so that they know where to go if they ever need help. On an individual level, adopt a policy of proactivity amongst all staff so that anytime anyone feels there could be a concern with a student, he/she speaks up.
4. **Give Students Time to Heal.** If you have a known situation of a student working through the mental health recovery and healing process, give him or her the time and space they need. Special accommodations may help to provide the student with the comfort and confidence they need to make it through the school day while they focus on their wellness. Such accommodations may include specific seating, additional time for homework and test-taking, and note-taking assistance.

As a school leader, you have the ability to improve mental health in our schools. By refocusing on student and faculty and staff mental health, your district will commit to genuinely living its ideals of developing and supporting well-rounded, confident individuals with the best, brightest, and longest possible futures in front of them.

Tags: mental health (<https://supereval.com/blog/tag/mental-health/>), mental illness in schools (<https://supereval.com/blog/tag/mental-illness-in-schools/>), school mental health (<https://supereval.com/blog/tag/school-mental-health/>), student mental health disorders (<https://supereval.com/blog/tag/student-mental-health-disorders/>), warning signs of mental illness



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## 2 Responses to “ Make Mental Health a Priority for Staff and Students ”

1.  Joshua Ryan (<https://howtoimprovementalhealthinschools.com/>) Says:

May 18th, 2020 at 6:23 am

Compliments on your Article! With the rising rate of mental health issues and teenage suicide in the world, awareness for such a pertinent topic is of paramount importance. Along with running a Free Suicide Hotline, we have also have articles (<https://howtoimprovementalhealthinschools.com/>) and videos online to help students in need. Wish you success in spreading the word.

2.  Jennifer Jordan Says:

May 21st, 2020 at 11:12 am

Thank you for your response and providing our readers with additional resources!

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