

EXPANDING MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES FOR NORTH CAROLINA STUDENTS

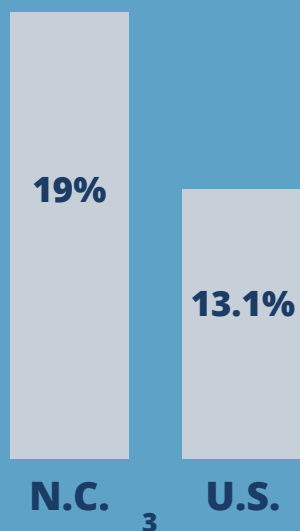
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PLCY 220

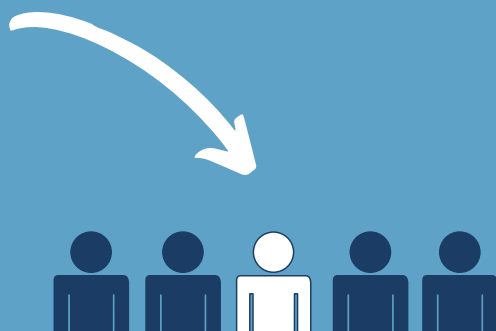
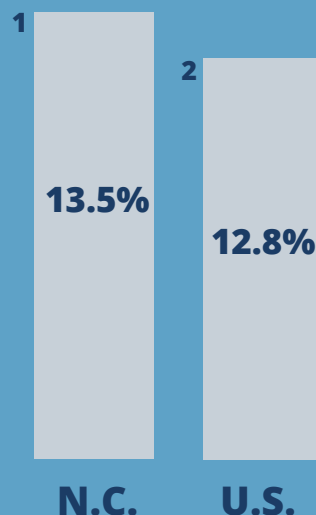
THE PROBLEM:

In North Carolina, the number of middle and high school students who reported experiencing symptoms of mental health disorders was significantly higher than the national average

% of students age 8-15 who have a mental health disorder any given year



% of high school students who have made a suicide plan in 2011



that means nearly **1 in 5** North Carolina students has a mental health disorder any year

STUDENTS ARE NOT RECEIVING TREATMENT AND IT IS THREATENING THEIR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

Of those North Carolina students with a mental health disorder, **75% will NOT receive treatment**³

School counselors reported discomfort in working with students who have formal mental health diagnoses⁴

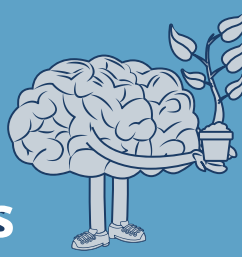


Mental health functioning is a vital component of effective learning and academic success⁴

and in 2014, only **15% of North Carolina schools had any type of school mental health program**³

POTENTIAL SOLUTIONS:

Expanding School Mental Health Programs



Research shows that school mental health services resulted in:

- Positive impacts for students exposed to chronic childhood trauma⁵
- Students reported significantly fewer mental health difficulties and improved mental health knowledge and attitudes⁶
- Teachers reported greater proficiency in managing mental health problems in their classrooms⁶

Options:

State-Mandated and State-Funded Plan Requiring:

- Teachers complete standardized mental health screenings of every student ⁶
- Opt-in school mental health programs, where students receive individualized therapy in school ⁷
- School counselors receive more mental health training
- School districts hire more school-based therapists and counselors who are licensed therapists

Potential Barriers:

- Societal stigma of mental health diagnoses and treatments
- Lack of material and human resources ⁸
- School culture in regards to mental health ⁸
- Funding and oversight from the state

Alleviating Barriers:

- School counselors want to work with school-based therapists ⁴
- Schools are usually eager to address mental health concerns ¹⁰

NC SENATE BILL 601 (2019-2020 SESSION): ⁹

"An Act to Require Public School Units to Develop and Implement a School-Based Mental Health Plan that Includes a Mental Health Training Program and Suicide Risk Referral Protocol"

This bill was introduced in 2019, was referred to a committee, and has been there ever since. It requires the State Board of Education to adopt a school-based mental health policy that includes mandatory minimum requirements, such as:

- **Providing protocol on suicide risk referral**
- **Requiring employees to complete mental health trainings**
- **Requiring each public school to adopt a plan for promoting student mental health and well-being**
- **Requiring annual reports from each public school on its compliance**

While this bill does take action on the issue of North Carolina students' mental health concerns, it is rather ambiguous. It does not provide a comprehensive, standardized plan to be implemented across school districts and does not take explicitly address in-school treatment plans for students affected by mental health disorders. The bill could be more effective if it enacted actions like the standardized mental health screenings and efforts to hire more school therapists.

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