



Contribution ID: 7

Type: Abstract for Research Paper

Mental Health in Educational Institutions

The mental health of students has become an undeniable concern. While institutions seek to educate, their current policies and infrastructure do not unanimously prioritize mental health; thus, they often can't meet students' needs and struggle to uphold the central mission. Attending becomes a stressful time for students. Besides coping with academic pressure, some deal with the stressful tasks. In this context, students experience the first onset of mental health and substance use problems or a worsening of symptoms. Given the uniqueness of students, there is a need to outline critical issues to consider when working with this population. In this commentary, first, the prevalence of psychiatric and substance use problems in students and the significance of assessing the age of onset of current psychopathology are described.

Students' needs to target mental health's national discussion toward actionable system change are education and institutions. These demonstrate that policy change is necessary to support students with psychiatric disabilities and mental health concerns fully. Research needs to explore implementing innovative programs, curricular changes, and supported education programs. The effect of health initiatives and services on schools' achievement, the need to address the mental health of historically neglected students, and interdisciplinary collaborations necessary to support enhanced outcomes.

With mental services embedded within the school, systems can create a continuum of integrative care that improves mental health and educational attainment. Education and mental health systems are needed to aid evidence-based practice. Integrative strategies that combine classroom-level and student-level interventions have much potential. A research agenda is needed that focuses on system-level implementation and maintenance of interventions over time. Both ethical and scientific justifications exist for integration of mental health and education: integration democratizes access to services and, if coupled with the use of evidence-based practices, can promote the healthy development of children.

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Track Classification: Mental Health in Educational Institutions