

# Mental health services on college campuses promote student success, report finds

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Penn State's Center for Collegiate Mental Health has released the [results of its 2022 Annual Report](#) examining the factors associated with voluntary withdrawal from school during counseling services. This

investigation was deemed essential given concerning national rates of "drop out" among college students (Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System, 2020). The report concludes that the availability of comprehensive mental health support services on college campuses is essential to promote student success.

"Our findings in this report demonstrate that college [counseling](#) centers nationwide provide critical services that support the academic mission of institutions," said Brett Scofield, executive director of the Center for Collegiate Mental Health. "When students improve during treatment at counseling centers, they are more likely to remain in school."

The report found several protective factors that reduced the risk of withdrawal from school, including improvement in depression, [anxiety](#) and general distress symptoms during services. Most notably, students were 51% less likely to withdraw from school during treatment if they experienced significant improvement in academic distress and were simultaneously involved in an extracurricular activity.

Numerous variables also were discovered that increased the risk that students will leave college while receiving counseling services. Most important, those who identified as a freshman or first-year student with current elevated levels of academic distress and a history of a psychiatric hospitalization were 48% more likely to withdraw from school during treatment.

"Our data shows there are a wide range of factors—both mental health and non-mental health related—that impact the risk of dropping out of school while receiving counseling services," said Scofield. "Therefore, it is essential for institutions to assess and strengthen their local offerings of mental health, academic, social and cultural support services that ultimately support the academic mission."

This year's report also described ongoing mental health trends among college and university counseling centers, including:

- While anxiety, stress and depression continue to be the most common concerns identified by therapists, they all slightly decreased in 2021–22. Trauma, as assessed by clinicians, notably increased.
- Student self-reported social anxiety symptoms exceeded generalized anxiety as the area of distress with the largest 12-year increase. The social anxiety symptom that saw the largest increase was the concern that "others do not like me." Academic distress declined slightly but remains significantly higher than before the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. While all symptoms of academic [distress](#) rose, problems staying motivated in class increased the most.
- History of trauma is the mental history item that has increased the most over the past 10 years. Childhood [emotional abuse](#) and [sexual violence](#) are the specific traumatic events that are primarily accounting for the change.
- Despite steadily decreasing over the last 10 years, the lifetime history of considered causing serious injury to another person increased from 5.3% in 2020–21 to 5.7% in 2021–22.

The Center for Collegiate Mental Health 2022 Annual Report collected data from 180 college and university counseling centers, 190,907 unique [college students](#) seeking [mental health](#) treatment, 4,688 clinicians, and more than 1.2 million appointments from the 2021–22 academic year. This is the 14th year the report has been produced.

Provided by Pennsylvania State University

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