

Easley High School's Journey to Mental Health Awareness and Wellness



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2018 – Mental Health Resources

- School counselors and administrators are paired together and loop with a group of students throughout their time in high school
- Mental health counselor – onsite 4 days a week
- Behavioral Health counselor – onsite 1.5 days a week



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EHS History

In recent years, we have seen that the resources we have in place are not sufficient in dealing with the depth of the mental health crisis.



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What's Wrong?

- Pickens County has the highest suicide rate in South Carolina
- There is one mental health provider for every 650:1 in South Carolina
- **1 in 5** teens & young adults lives with a mental health condition
 - *National Alliance for Mental Illness*
- **5.13%** of youth report having a substance use or alcohol problem
 - *Mental Health America*

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And That's Not All...

South Carolina Adolescent Mental Health Facts Depression symptoms among high school students (grades 9-12), 2017

Total	33%
Male	23%
Female	43%

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Depressive Episodes Ages 12-17, 2015-2016

Percent of adolescents ages 12-17 who report they had at least 1 major depressive episode (during the 12 months before the survey)

South Carolina	United States
11%	13%

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Suicidal Thoughts High school students - 2017

Percent of high school students who report they <u>seriously</u> <u>considered attempting suicide</u> (during the 12 months before the survey)	South Carolina	United States
Total	19%	17%
Male	14%	12%
Female	24%	22%

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Suicidal Attempts High school students - 2017

Percent of high school students who report they <u>attempted</u> suicide 1 or more times (during the 12 months before the survey)	South Carolina	United States
Total	11%	7%
Male	8%	5%
Female	13%	9%

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Mental Health Assessment

The Born This Way Foundation (founded by pop singer Lady Gaga) and the Benenson Strategy Group interviewed over 4000 young people (ages 15-24) to assess mental health.

Who was interviewed?

- High School Students
- College/University Students
- Employed Young People
- Their Parents

BORN THIS WAY FOUNDATION
· EMPOWERING YOUTH · INSPIRING BRAVERY ·

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Mental Health Assessment Results

- 57% of young people report that mental health is a very important priority
 - The majority value their mental health over physical health
- Over 75% reported that sharing advice, stories, and connecting with others were also key in maintaining mental wellness
- 74% expressed an interest in taking a class or training program to better prepare them to help a friend facing a mental health crisis.

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Mental Health Assessment Results

- Kindness matters
 - Young people in better mental health are in kind communities
- Peer support networks are crucial
 - Young people rely on friends for mental health support
- Mental health resources make a difference
 - Resources that foster kindness in schools, colleges, and workplaces help improve mental wellness

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EHS Response

So how do we identify, understand, and respond to signs of addictions and mental illnesses while fostering an empathetic, empowered school environment?



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Getting Started

- Met with representatives from mental health and behavioral health, along with the former director of the South Carolina Department of Mental Health

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Mental Health First Aid Course

- Attended summer 2019
- Led by Robyn Ellison with Prisma Healthcare
- Grant-funded Course
- All SDPC administrators were trained

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Post-MHFA Course Action

Meeting with Robyn Ellison (course presenter from Prisma)

- Why EHS?
 - Prisma was waiting for a school to approach them
 - EHS was the first to express interest
- 1 year goal
 - To train 150 students
 - To date, we have trained over 200
- 5 year goal
 - Give all 9th graders the opportunity to go through training

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Mental Health First Aid Course Overview

Mental Health First Aid teaches participants **how to identify, understand and respond to signs of mental illnesses and substance use disorders**. This 8-hour training gives the skills needed to reach out and provide initial support to adolescents (ages 12-18) who may be developing a mental health or substance use problem and help connect them to the appropriate care.

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What Participants Learn

1. **Risk factors and warning signs** of mental health and substance use problems
2. **Information** on depression, anxiety, trauma, psychosis and substance use
3. A **5-step action plan** to help someone who is developing a mental health problem or is in crisis
4. Available evidence-based professional, peer and self-help **resources**



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MHFA 5 Step Action Plan: “ALGEE”

- **Assess** for risk of suicide or harm
- **Listen** nonjudgmentally
- **Give** reassurance and information
- **Encourage** appropriate professional help
- **Encourage** self-help and other support strategies

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EHS Implementation

- 2019-20 Trainings
 - Began with our large student groups
 - Student Council, NJROTC, Gaming Club
 - Band, Chorus, Teacher Cadets, etc.
 - Groups with ties to the community
 - Cosmetology/small animal care
- Now
- Course advertisement/ voluntary student sign-up

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Follow-up and Reaction

- Students feel empowered
 - Like knowing they are part of the solution
- Community Reaction

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Next Steps

- Semester course
- Continue trainings
- Time for teachers

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