

# THE EDUCATOR



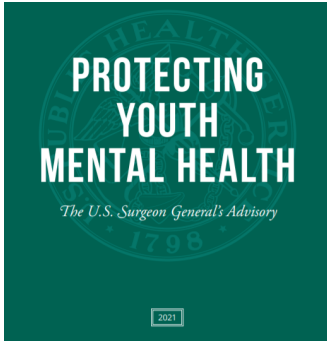
WESTERN CT COALITION  
promoting best practices in prevention and behavioral health

A publication of the Drug Free Schools Committee, Spring 2022

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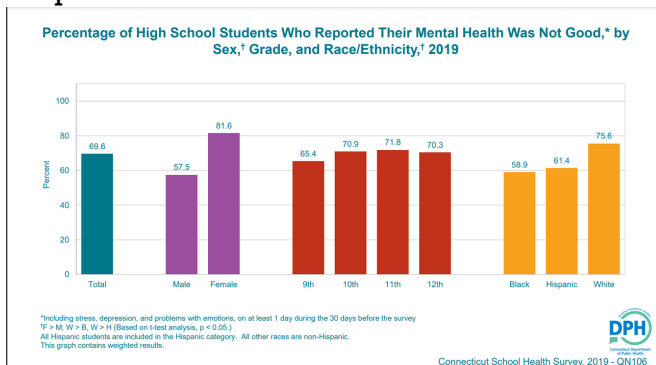
## Youth Mental Health

In December 2021, U.S. Surgeon General Vivek Murthy issued an advisory highlighting the urgent need to address the nation's youth mental health crisis. The advisory outlines the pandemic's unprecedented impacts on the mental health of America's youth and families, as well as the mental health challenges that existed long before the pandemic. In this edition of The Educator, we will take a closer look at youth mental health and share some of the recommendations of the Surgeon General. In his advisory, he provides many recommendations to address this issue and how all of us can help.

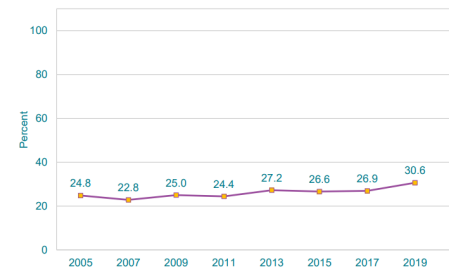


### What the Data is Telling Us

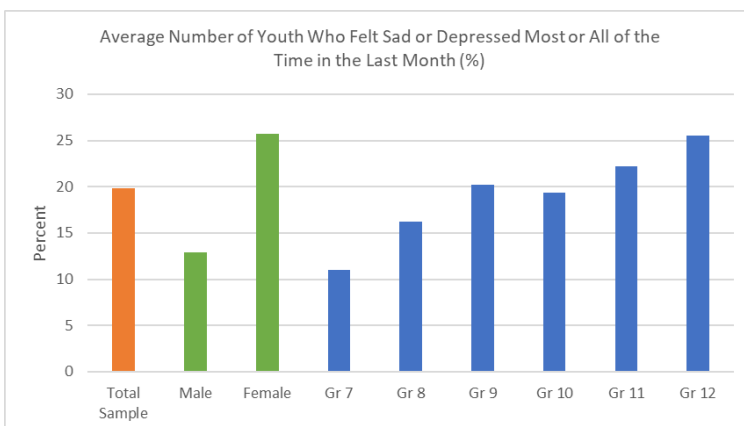
The CT School Health Survey is a school based survey conducted in grades 9-12 within randomly chosen classrooms every 2 years. In 2019, close to 70% of students reported their mental health was not good. Over time, we have seen an increase in the percentage of students who reported feeling sad or hopeless.



Percentage of Students Who Felt Sad or Hopeless 2005-2019



Below is 2019 data from 7 schools in Western CT.\* 19.9% of students reported feeling sad or depressed most or all of the time in the past month. Females students reported higher rates than male students, and 12th grade students reported the highest rates.



\*Search Institute Attitudes and Behaviors Survey

**Factors That Can Shape the Mental Health of Young People:\*\***

- Age, race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation
- Coping skills
- Relationships with parents and caregivers
- Family mental health
- Financial stability
- Trauma
- Relationships with Peers
- School Climate
- Neighborhood safety
- Healthcare
- Social and economic inequalities
- Media and technology

\*\*WHO's Determinants of Adolescent Health Development: An Ecological Model

## What Family Members and Caregivers Can Do to Improve Youth Mental Health

**Be the best role model you can be by taking care of your own mental and physical health**

- take breaks, get enough sleep, exercise and eat right, and stay connected to family and friends

**Help children develop strong, safe, and stable relationships with you and other trusted adults**

- spend time with your children, show them love and acceptance, and listen to them

**Encourage health relationships between your children and their peers**

- provide opportunities for play and structured activities like sports and music

**Do your best to provide a supportive, safe and stable home**

- maintain a daily predictable schedule for dinnertime and bedtime

**Talk to your children about the risks of alcohol and other drugs**

- the earlier a child begins using substances, the greater their chances of developing a problem

**Ensure regular visits to your healthcare provider**

- they can provide advice on how to prevent problems, and can screen, diagnose and treat mental illness

**Look out for warning signs of distress and seek help when needed. It is ok to ask for help**

- irritability, anger, withdrawal, changes in appearance, sleep or eating habits can all be signs



### Technology and Youth Mental Health:

Technology has improved our lives and provides us with unique opportunities to learn and connect with others. For many people it can have adverse effects like bullying and exclusion.

**Questions for Families to Consider to ensure positive experiences**

- How much time is my child spending online?
- Is it taking away from other healthy activities like exercise, sleep and spending quality time with family and friends?
- Am I aware of what devices and content my child has access to?
- What is the impact of time they spend online?
- Are they engaging because they want to or feel they have to?

**Common Sense Media's Parent's Ultimate Guides** provide insight for parents into platforms like TikTok, Instagram and Fortnite to name a few.

Use this [link](#) to visit their webpage and learn more.

**Crisis Intervention  
Supports**

**Suicide Prevention  
Lifeline 1-800-273-TALK  
(8255)**

**Crisis Text Line- text CT  
to 741-741**

**CT 211 to connect to  
mobile crisis support**

**Resources for Families:  
(links)**

**healthychildren.org**  
parenting tips from the  
American Academy of  
Pediatrics

**Child Mind Institute**  
a mental health  
family resource center

**Gizmo's Pawesome Guide  
to Mental Health**

an evidence-based program of  
the CT Suicide Advisory Board

**For more mental health resources and information about treatment providers,  
visit the Mental Health Page of our website**

