



Surveying the Mental Health of Utah's Public College and University Students

Across the country, the mental health of college students has become a prominent concern in the higher education landscape.¹ This issue is also a significant one for Utah, as the state's suicide rate has been consistently higher than the national rate for more than a decade.² In 2017, the legislature passed HCR 16, *Concurrent Resolution Declaring Mental Health Issues to be a Public Health Crisis at Utah Higher Education Institutions*.³

Systemwide mental health survey

To better understand the landscape of mental health issues at Utah's public colleges and universities, the USHE Board of Regents recommended that all USHE institutions administer the same mental health survey during the same year, to ensure comparable results. In spring 2019, USHE institutions administered the American College Health Association–National College Health Assessment⁴ survey (ACHA NCHA). The system office collected and analyzed the survey results for the mental health section.

The systemwide survey delivered compelling data about the mental health of USHE students.⁵ Five thousand two hundred and two students from across USHE institutions responded to the survey. Of those, in the last 12 months:

- 57.8% “felt things were hopeless”
- 89.7% “felt overwhelmed by all they had to do”
- 86.3% felt “exhausted (not from physical activity)”
- 66.1% “felt very lonely”
- 71.1% “felt very sad”
- 45.6% “felt so depressed it was difficult to function”
- 63% “felt overwhelming anxiety”
- 42.7% “felt overwhelming anger”
- 9.3% “intentionally cut, burned, bruised or otherwise injured themselves”
- 14.9% “seriously considered suicide”
- 1.9% “attempted suicide”

As far as seeking treatment, 14.2% said they have received psychological or mental services from their current institution's Counseling or Health Services, and 79.7% indicated they would consider seeking

¹ <https://www.higheredtoday.org/2018/12/17/rise-mental-health-college-campuses-protecting-emotional-health-nations-college-students/>

² <https://health.utah.gov/vipp/topics/suicide/>

³ <https://le.utah.gov/~2017/bills/static/HCR016.html>

⁴ https://www.acha.org/NCHA/NCHA_Home

⁵ https://ushe.edu/wp-content/uploads/pdf/agendas/20190912/TAB_E_2019-9-13.pdf