

## Our Impact on Student Mental and Emotional Health

### Summary

Nationally, researchers have shown that more than 30% of adolescents experience significant health, social and emotional problems that hinder their educational progress, and there is strong evidence that many of these youth may not receive the support and care they need to succeed in school.<sup>1,2,3</sup>

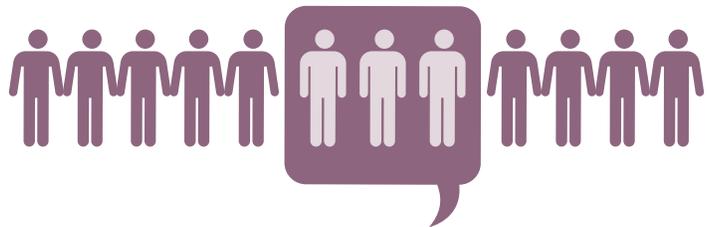
For San Francisco's public high school students experiencing social, emotional or mental health distress, our Wellness Centers provide an array of services that promote emotional well-being.

For the past ten years, our surveys and interviews with thousands of youth served show they learn how to reduce their stress, develop healthy coping skills, and improve their relationships with peers and adults as a result of participating in Wellness services.



Each year, more than half of our students say they would not have received mental and emotional support services if their school did not have a Wellness Center.<sup>†</sup>

"I am relieved to finally be able to have a caring adult who I can talk to honestly and someone who I can rely on for help." — SFUSD High School Student



26% of SFUSD high school students reported symptoms of depression.

## What The Data Are Saying

In San Francisco's public high schools, a significant number of youth experience health and wellness problems that diminish the quality of their daily life, isolate them from adults at school, interfere with peer and family relationships, and limit their capacity to reach their full potential in and out of school.

Caring relationships between students and adults at school is a fundamental psychological need and a key factor in academic engagement and achievement.<sup>4,5</sup> However, according to the California Department of Education's Healthy Kids Survey in 2011, just 27% of San Francisco's 9th graders and 29% of 11th graders met state benchmarks for the presence of these caring relationships.

Teenagers suffering mental and emotional pain can find the support they need in their school's Wellness Center. They know that Wellness Centers are safe places where they will be treated with respect. Our teams of caring professionals develop meaningful relationships with students that help address their needs and build a sense of belonging and connectedness to their school community.

**11%** of our students were bullied at school.

**20%** of 9th graders were "cyber bullied."

**26%** reported symptoms of depression.

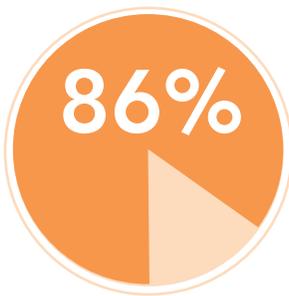
**13%** seriously considered attempting suicide.

And nearly **one in ten** (9.4%) reported a suicide attempt.

According to the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention's 2011 Youth Risk Behavior Survey of San Francisco Unified School District (SFUSD) high school students.

## What Teachers Are Saying

In 2011, we surveyed **over 700 teachers**, and 72% told us they had referred at least one student to their Wellness Center that school year. Among these teachers...



reported improvements in the emotional well-being of students participating in Wellness services



reported improvements in the classroom behavior of students participating in Wellness services

<sup>1</sup> Costello, E. J., B. Burns, et al. (1993). How can epidemiology improve mental health services for children and adolescents? *Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry* 32: 1106-1113.

<sup>2</sup> Becker, B. E., and Luthar, S.S. (2002). Social-Emotional Factors Affecting Achievement Outcomes Among Disadvantaged Students: Closing the Achievement Gap. *Educational Psychologist* 37: 197-214.

<sup>3</sup> Myrle, T., Nelson C.D., et al. (2009). Trends in adolescent and young adult health in the United States. *Journal of Adolescent Health* 45: 8-24.

<sup>4</sup> Ryan, A. M., & Patrick, H. (2001). The classroom social environment and changes in adolescents' motivation and engagement during middle school. *American Educational Research Journal* 38: 437-460.

<sup>5</sup> Faircloth, B. S., & Hamm, J. V. (2005). Sense of belonging among high school students representing 4 ethnic groups. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence* 34: 293-309.

## Wellness Services that Support Student Mental and Emotional Health

Our therapists, social workers, nurses and outreach workers provide students with individual and group counseling, case management and other critical supports. In the 2010-11 school year, more than 7,000 students participated in Wellness services, with 92% receiving one-on-one care. That year, Wellness staff:

- Provided **behavioral health counseling** services to over 2,000 students, with 35% participating in five or more sessions.
- Provided **general counseling** services to 1,807 students, with 28% participating in five or more sessions during the year.
- Delivered over 300 **classroom educational presentations** on topics such as stress reduction, LGBTQ sensitivity and coming out, healthy relationships, sexual harassment, bullying prevention and many other wellness topics.
- Partnered with their schools' Health Promotion Committees to implement 167 **school-wide health awareness events** and **parent workshops** that fostered awareness of key health and wellness issues.

### What Students Are Saying\*

We surveyed **over 500 students** who were participating in individual counseling<sup>†</sup>, and:

- 90%** said there was an adult in their Wellness Center who really cares about them
- 93%** felt heard and understood by their counselor
- 81%** said they were learning how to address their problems
- 79%** learned ways to reduce stress in their life
- 80%** reported being better able to handle daily life

We surveyed **over 900 students** who were participating in therapeutic and other support groups<sup>‡</sup>, and:

- 76%** said they were feeling better about themselves
- 76%** said they better understand what other people go through
- 76%** said they made new friends
- 70%** learned how to better resolve conflict with peers and adults
- 81%** said they would recommend their support group to a friend in need

\*Based on survey data from Spring 2010 of students receiving five or more individual sessions with Wellness staff and/or participating in at least one Wellness support group.

<sup>†</sup>ETR Individual Survey 2010 (n=581), <sup>‡</sup>ETR Group Survey 2010 (n=914).