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## Mental Health of Students: A Teacher Resource

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Mental Health of Students: A Teacher Resource

<https://kathsegu.wixsite.com/mentalhealth>

Kathryn Seguin

Honors Project

Submitted to the Honors College at Bowling Green State University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for graduation with University Honors May 2021.

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## **Project Overview**

### **What is this Resource and What Does it Consist of?**

This resource is a professional website regarding the four main types of mental health disorders as well as a detailed list of legal responsibilities of teachers and school personnel to be involved in the mental health of students. This website is a resource tool for teachers for a variety of reasons, and it is simply that; a resource. It is not a diagnostic tool and does not substitute for a mental health professional, such as a psychologist or counselor. It is simply to be used for educational purposes only. It is a compilation of information collected from several sites that are located on this single website. It is to support teachers in their understanding of mental health issues of school-aged children and adolescents. As the author, I did not create these materials or information, but have gathered research from professional outside sources.

Within each of the four mental health categories, which include anxiety, depression, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), and substance use, are sections that include an overview of the disorder as well as specific teacher tools for that specific disorder. In the overview section, there are several breakdown categories, including; definition, signs and symptoms, risk factors, differential diagnoses, as well as a complete list of sources used within the page. Within each of these categories, I have listed specific research-based findings from a variety of sources that apply to what might be seen in adolescents or in the classroom. In the teacher tools section, there are several categories, including; providing emotional support, classroom setup and schedules, giving instructions and assignments, introducing new concepts and lessons, communication between home and school, building organization skills, or a combination of these. Within each of these categories, I have listed a variety of tools and strategies to be used within the classroom or with students in general to assist them with their

mental health in their specific struggles. At the end of each page, I have included a compiled list of all sources used within that page and small footnotes throughout the page to signify which source was used in each piece of research.

Within the legal responsibilities page, I have included essential information for teachers to understand about the implications of mental health issues being presented in the school and how it may be handled. I have also included specific court cases in which there was negligence from school staff, including teachers and other personnel, that resulted in lawsuit. Within the school personnel page, I have included a detailed list of possible personnel that can be hired within the school and that teachers may have the opportunity to work with, as well as a detailed description of their job duties and education. At the bottom of this page is a compiled list of hotlines, textlines, and websites that can be used in a possible mental health crisis situation. Lastly, on the feedback page I have included a space for the website visitors to share their thoughts and suggestions for the website, and I plan to implement changes based on this feedback if necessary.

### **Why is this Resource Necessary?**

This resource is very necessary to the lives of many, including students, teachers, families, administrators, the community, and any other population affected by mental health. Studies estimate that about 18% of the U.S. population ages 18-54 are affected by a mental disorder during a given year and about 50% of the population will have a diagnosis of or a diagnosable disorder in their lifetime (Jorm, 2016). It is beyond a doubt that teachers should have a thorough understanding of the mental health disorders they may witness in students during their time as a teacher. Along with that, teens are less likely to reach out for help regarding their mental health. In fact, in 2014 less than half (41.2%) of adolescents who went through a

depressive episode received treatment for the depressive episode (Jorm, 2016). Therefore, it is imperative that teachers, who are with students almost every day, to understand these mental health disorders, know the signs and symptoms, and reach out to students who may be suffering. When teachers do see mental health issues in their students, they should do their best to reach out to the mental health school personnel accordingly.

In society as a whole, the number of adolescents that have had mental health issues has grown significantly. According to Mental Health America, “Youth mental health is worsening. From 2012 to 2017, the prevalence of past-year Major Depressive Episodes (MDE) increased from 8.66 percent to 13.01 percent of youth ages 12-17. Now over two million youth have MDE with severe impairment. Only 28.2 percent of youth with severe MDE were receiving some consistent treatment...” (Mental Health America, n.d.). This statistic, and more, go to show that there has been a strong increase in mental health issues in society and in adolescents specifically, which are not always being treated or recognized. This is the exact reason as to why teachers need to be knowledgeable and prepared for mental health issues to arise within the classroom.

According to Mental Health First Aid USA, which is the author of the training program that third year education major students are required to complete through BGSU, “More than 2 million people across the United States have been trained in Mental Health First Aid by a dedicated base of more than 15,000 Instructors” (About, 2013). Currently, training for mental health first aid is done by a variety of different servicers, one of which being Mental Health First Aid USA. In Ohio, the Department of Education launched Project AWARE, which stands for Advancing Wellness And Resilience in Education. This program’s goals are to “raise awareness of behavioral health issues among school-aged youth, provide training to detect and respond to mental health challenges and crisis in children and young adults, and increase access to

behavioral health supports for children, youth, and families” (Project AWARE Ohio, 2020).

Overall, as time continues, there is more of an emphasis on mental health training when it comes to educators, administrators, and other school staff.

On top of the already increasing mental health issues regarding adolescents in the United States, the COVID-19 pandemic has pushed this issue even further due to students staying at home with less outlets for their emotions. School psychologists are doing their best to work with teachers during this time of distance learning and they are attempting to support students' mental health needs in a virtual context (Minke, 2020). School psychologists are asking questions such as, “How do we protect students who experience domestic violence and abuse, given the increasing stress on families? How do we support students with existing or emerging mental-health problems?” (Minke, 2020). Although it is a hard time for everyone, it is more necessary than ever for teachers and other school staff to understand the effects of COVID-19 on the mental health of students. Overall, there has been an obvious need for mental health resources for everyone within our communities, no matter the circumstances.

### **Who will be Using this Resource?**

This resource will be mostly used by teachers, but the content is not limited to solely teachers. It can be used by students, parents, mental health school personnel, school administration, and other educational faculty and staff. For teachers specifically, they will be using this resource for purely educational purposes, and it is aimed to serve as a foundation of mental health understanding in the absence of mental health training. It is meant to serve as a surface-level tool to be used in the case of suspected mental health struggles seen in students in their classroom so that they can have a general sense of how to differentiate their students with mental health struggles. More specifically, the school personnel page is important in that it

guides the teachers who are using the resource to the direct source of mental health professionals to assist, as it is not the teacher's legal responsibility to provide counseling directly to the student. Students and parents can use the resource as an informational source for basic mental health research and to get a grasp of potential strategies that teachers may implement within their classroom or their child's classroom. Mental health school personnel can use this resource to guide teachers to the information or to build upon the teaching strategies mentioned to adapt the specific student's situation to the classroom. Administrators can use this tool to gauge the mental health understanding that the teachers within the school have and to train and increase education with them accordingly.

### **When will this Resource be Used?**

This resource will be used when a teacher or any other individual in need of the resource feels that there is a student or adolescent that is struggling with their mental health. It is always better to be safe than sorry, as it may save a student's life. Therefore, it is essential to use this resource or seek out professional mental health resources whenever there is a concern - big or small. Since teachers are with students for extended periods of time on a daily basis, they can sometimes be on the front end of their student's lives and may notice these struggles before other individuals in the student's lives. This resource will be used when the teacher notices a struggle and they can deal with the struggle accordingly, most of the time meaning that they would encourage the student to seek professional help. This resource can also be used after the student establishes a connection with mental health professionals and is receiving treatment when a mental health school personnel reaches out to a teacher to give special considerations to the student. This is why the teacher tools portion of the resource is so important, as it gives ideas to

the teachers to differentiate the student, make them feel welcome in their classroom, and possibly save their lives.

This resource can also be used as an educational tool for pre-service teachers, as demonstrated in the defense. Pre-service teachers are expected to go through young adult mental health training, and this resource further elaborates on the information used within these training sessions. Professors can share this resource with their students as a teaching tool for pre-service teachers to be open to the possibility of mental health struggles of students in their future classrooms. Pre-service teachers should be prepared and open-minded regarding student mental health.

### **Where can this Resource be Found?**

This resource can be found through the Honors College Project Archives on the BGSU website as well as through the website link. This link can be sent to administrators of local school districts and further distributed to teachers and other school personnel for their use. This link can also be sent to mental health training organizations if they do not have their own website resource or if they would like to partner with me to use this free teacher resource. After the teachers and other individuals have the link to the website, they can bookmark it or save it to their browsers for easy access to the material when they see a student struggling in their classroom. Along with that, professors at the higher education level and within teaching and learning programs, such as at BGSU, can share this resource with pre-service teachers as an additional teaching tool regarding what teaching actually looks like and what should actually be expected as a teacher. Overall, this resource can be found in a variety of ways and will continue to be an accessible and resourceful tool after the Honors Project is completed and submitted in December of 2020.

## Feedback

### What do Pre-Service Teachers Have to Say?

After completing the Honors Project Defense on December 3rd, 2020, I have gathered feedback from the audience through a Google Form. The audience that responded to the feedback survey included 7 pre-service students within Methods of Student Teaching and 1 professor within the School of Teaching and Learning. There were a total of 13 prompts to be answered regarding the level of comfortability, knowledge, and information that was presented, and the results have been included in both Appendix C and D.

The first question asks the audience their level of awareness of mental health issues that students may bring to the classroom on a scale of one to five. According to *Appendix C, Figure 1*, the results indicate that the audience feels that they expect several mental health issues in their future classrooms and that they feel that this is actually a prevalent issue. When asking the audience their level of comfort of addressing mental health issues both prior and after the presentation, the results as seen in *Appendix C, Figures 2 and 3*, the audience was moderately comfortable prior to the presentation, whereas they were much more comfortable after the presentation. These answers indicate that the presentation was successful in improving the comfortability of the audience in discussing mental health issues. This is important because if teachers are not comfortable discussing mental health issues, they may not be fully able to assist the students in their classroom who suffer from these issues or their symptoms. When asking the audience their level of understanding of certain mental health issues both prior and after the presentation, the results in *Appendix C, Figures 4 and 5* are similar to those seen in *Appendix C, Figures 2 and 3*. The audience indicated that they felt their level of understanding prior to the presentation was at a moderate level of understanding, and after the presentation was at a high

level of understanding. Although these students comprising the audience have already completed Mental Health First Aid Training through the University during the Spring of 2020, this website acted a refresher for their understanding of mental health topics and took those topics to the next level by adding additional teacher tools within each category.

In *Appendix C, Figure 6*, every person within my audience stated that they are very confident that they will use this resource as a teacher. To me, this was one of the most important questions and the response tells me that this resource met my main goal of this project; to be useful. In *Appendix C, Figures 7 and 8*, the audience was asked if they feel they will use this resource as both a student teacher and as a teacher in their future classrooms. Again, the results indicate that the audience does in fact feel that they will use the website to a high level, indicating that I have met my goal of having a useful website that has intentions to be utilized in the professional lives of my audience of pre-service teachers.

Within this feedback form, I have also given the audience an opportunity to respond to several short answer questions so that they are able to explain their answers in more detail than the numerical response questions. In *Appendix D, Response 1*, I asked the audience what new information they learned and I received a variety of responses. The responses indicate that the audience learned about the connection between mental health issues and teachers and that teachers and other school personnel can make accommodations to students that don't have to be "giant adjustments". The results also state that the tool that I have designed to be in a website format is a "quick and easy resource to go to when a new issue comes up" and that they "love the tool I have designed as a central platform to share this information". This tells me that I was successful in making the website user-friendly and informational. Lastly, one of the responses also explained that they learned from the presentation that my personal experiences motivated

me to make this resource and that the topic of suicide is shocking and prevalent, which was another aim of mine to make sure the website is prevalent to the users. In *Appendix D, Response 2*, the results indicate that “everything was displayed very well and cleanly” and that the presentation had no elements that were unclear to the audience. Overall, reading these responses has reinforced the success and reaching of my goal of making sure this website is user friendly, informative, clearly presented, and prevalent to the audience.

In *Appendix D, Response 3*, I asked the audience if there was anything that should be included that was not included, and I received several great ideas that could be implemented to this website in the future. One of the ideas presented to me is to have early indicators for the behaviors, which I have actually included in the website as “risk factors” within each of the main pages of the website. To build upon this idea, I could include more teacher tools that work well with students presenting symptoms of mental health issues without being directly diagnosed. It was also suggested that the website could be “expanded to cover even more issues”, which is something that I definitely would like to implement while updating and forming the website over time. Another idea stated that the website could include a section that is “presented in chart for a quick reference guide” for the psychological concerns that they may face within the classroom, which I agree with and believe would make the information easier to read. Lastly, the feedback suggested that I could include a “comment area for teachers to share their personal experiences with mental health situations in their classroom. Teachers can even share their experiences using your website”, which I think is a great way to get teachers to interact with the site other than the feedback form on the last page and for teachers to communicate with each other through this website. In *Appendix D, Response 4*, I asked the audience if they had any additional feedback, questions, comments, or concerns that they would like to share with me. Much of this feedback

was very positive, and one of the audience members stated that they will “more than likely come back to this and especially know what to do when or if an issue does arise”, again indicating that this tool is useful and prevalent. Another audience member stated that they really liked the organization of the website and that “it is very easy for a teacher to use and quickly access information”, which I was also glad to hear as I met my goal of having a user-friendly website tool.

In conclusion, I was pleased to see through the feedback that I have received that the audience indicated positive results regarding this resource. The results indicated that I had successfully met all my goals with this Honors Project and was successful in the planning, creation, and implementation of this website. I look forward to seeing teachers, pre-service teachers, professors, and others actually utilize this website and benefit from it. I hope that this website resource can be a steppingstone for the audience to become caring and mental-health-conscious professionals, and hopefully save lives in the process.

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Appendix A - Website Video Archives

YouTube Link to Website Walkthrough (5:00) - <https://youtu.be/fYgI0ExyV3M>

YouTube Link to Website Presentation/Defense (24:38) - <https://youtu.be/5OJr6nAIDiQ>

## Appendix B - Website References

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#### 9. Legal Responsibilities

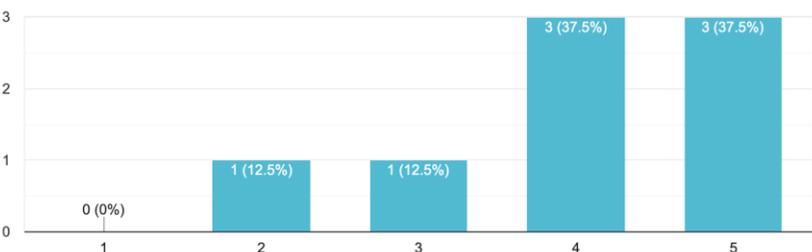
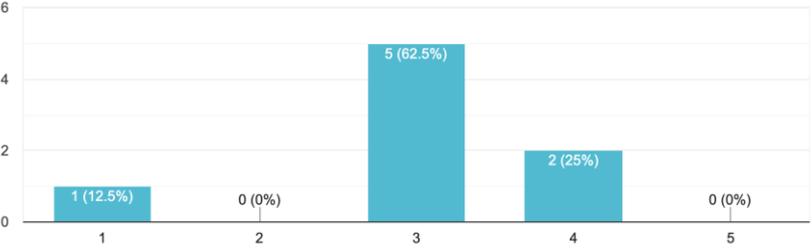
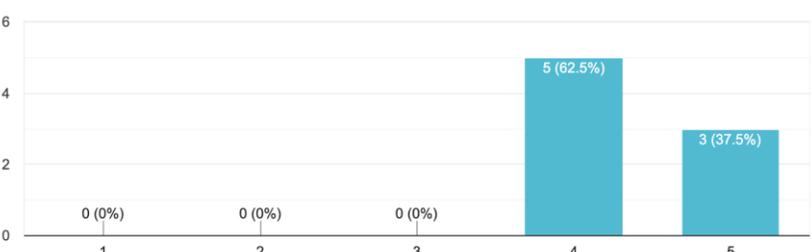
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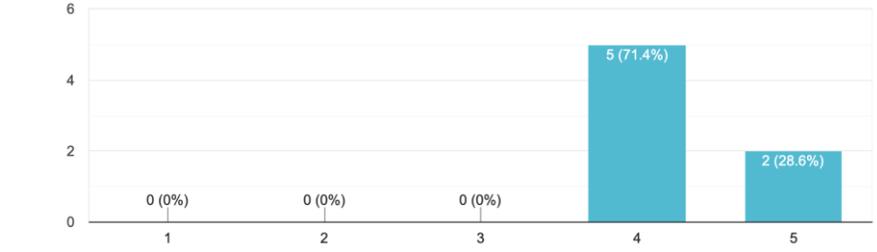
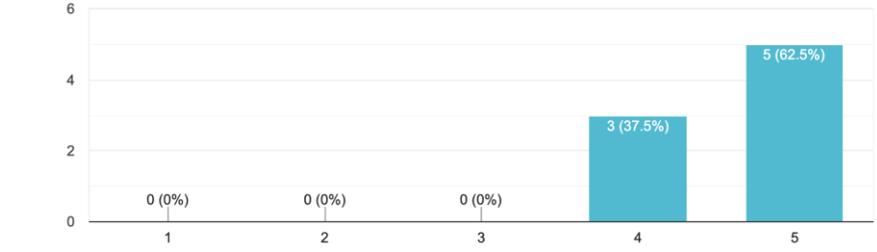
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Appendix C - Feedback Numerical Figures

Figure	Photo	Explanation																		
<p>Figure 1</p>	<p>What is your level of awareness of mental health issues that students may bring to the classroom?</p> <p>8 responses</p>  <table border="1" data-bbox="284 514 1096 766"> <thead> <tr> <th>Response</th> <th>Count</th> <th>Percentage</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>1</td> <td>0</td> <td>0%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2</td> <td>1</td> <td>12.5%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>3</td> <td>1</td> <td>12.5%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>4</td> <td>3</td> <td>37.5%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>5</td> <td>3</td> <td>37.5%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Response	Count	Percentage	1	0	0%	2	1	12.5%	3	1	12.5%	4	3	37.5%	5	3	37.5%	<p>Figure 1 poses the question, “what is your level of awareness of mental health issues that students may bring to the classroom?” on a scale of 1 to 5. The response 1 represents “I do not anticipate any issues” and the response 5 represents “I anticipate several issues”</p>
Response	Count	Percentage																		
1	0	0%																		
2	1	12.5%																		
3	1	12.5%																		
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Appendix D - Feedback Responses

Response	Photo	Explanation
<p>Response 1</p>	<p>What new information did you learn as a result of this presentation? 6 responses</p> <p>I learned about the liability that teachers have in regards to students mental health.</p> <p>There is a variety of easy adaptations that can be made for students with mental health issues. It does not need to be a giant adjustment.</p> <p>What came out to me were some of Kathryn's personal experiences to understand why she was so motivated to make a great resource. The suicide prevention and prevalence still always shocks me.</p> <p>Except for the stories, none of this content was new to me (I'm faculty and my research is close to this issue,) but I love the tool you've designed as a central platform to share this information- I will share with my colleagues, Methods and Seminar students</p> <p>I learned about the different personnel available in a school</p> <p>I appreciate the ease of use and having a quick and easy resource to go to when a new issue comes up. I don't necessarily remember the strategies I am not using, so it's helpful to have this to go to when an issue arises and I need a refresher.</p>	<p>Long Answer 1 poses the question “What new information did you learn as a result of this presentation?” and allows the audience to respond in a long answer format.</p>
<p>Response 2</p>	<p>What, if anything, was unclear in this presentation? 6 responses</p> <p>I learned about the legal issues with mental health</p> <p>none, everything was displayed very well cleanly.</p> <p>I thought everything made sense and was clear.</p> <p>Nothing as far as I am concerned</p> <p>all was very clear</p> <p>nope!</p>	<p>Long Answer 2 poses the question “What, if anything, was unclear in this presentation?” and allows the audience to respond in a long answer format.</p>

<p>Response 3</p>	<p>Is there anything that you would suggest that should be included in this presentation that was not included?</p> <p>7 responses</p> <p>No</p> <p>Is it possible to have early indicators of these behaviors to see the mental health problems before it becomes an issue</p> <p>I think in the future this could be expanded to cover even more issues. It's a great resource!</p> <p>Nothing that comes to me mind at this moment. I can tell it was very time consuming!</p> <p>You discussed what these psych. concerns might look like in the classroom and how teachers might address. This might also be presented in chart form for a quick reference guide.</p> <p>Maybe a comment area for teachers to share their personal experiences with mental health situations in their classroom. Teachers can even share their experiences using your website in their own classroom.</p> <p>No - great job!</p>	<p>Long Answer 3 poses the question “Is there anything that you would suggest that should be included in this presentation that was not included?” and allows the audience to respond in a long answer format.</p>
<p>Response 4</p>	<p>Do you have any additional feedback, questions, comments, or concerns?</p> <p>7 responses</p> <p>Great Presentation</p> <p>Nice job on this!</p> <p>I do not, I will more than likely come back to this and especially know what to do when or if an issue does arise.</p> <p>awesome work!!</p> <p>Thanks!</p> <p>You did a great job with this website it is very thorough and a useful tool for educators.</p> <p>Again, I really like the organization of this website. It is very easy for a teacher to use and QUICKLY access information.</p>	<p>Long Answer 4 poses the question “Do you have any additional feedback, questions, comments, or concerns?” and allows the audience to respond in a long answer format.</p>