

Th 21: Teachers and students speak out on Universal Mental Health Screens in K-12 schools: An integrative review

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Abstract

Problem: The prevalence of pediatric mental health disorders is a national crisis. In 2020, suicide was the second leading cause of death in the U.S. for ages 10-14. Most schools offer health screenings, including vision, hearing, body mass index, and postural back problems. However, few schools provide universal mental health screenings (UMHS). It is projected that UMHS would identify an additional 11-20% of students requiring further intervention. Early identification and intervention may lead to improved academic performance, increased emotional intelligence, and lower rates of problem behaviors. UMHS in schools is emerging, yet teacher and student perceptions of UMHS are not well understood.

Purpose: This integrative review aims to understand teacher and student perceptions of UMHS.

Search Strategy: A systematic search was guided by PsycINFO, ERIC, CINAHL, and Google Scholar. Primary research conducted in K-12 schools that assessed perceptions of teachers and students on UMHS was included.

Literature Search/Synthesis of Evidence: Six articles met the inclusion criteria. Of the 6 articles, 5 focused on teacher perceptions, and only 1 focused on student perceptions. The results suggest that teachers support the implementation of UMHS and interventions in the school. Students expressed concerns about anonymity, understanding the screening process, complexity, and lengthiness. Students embraced the emotional reflection needed during screenings.

Implications for Practice: Teachers validate the importance of the implementation of UMHS in school systems. Mental health education for teachers is necessary before implementation. Future research may explore the understanding of student perceptions of UMHS for successful implementation.

Keywords: Teachers, Students, Universal Mental Health Screens, Perceptions