

# Mental Health Support for College Students

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# Agenda

- Prevalence and Impacts of Mental Health Challenges
- Research-to-Practice: How Institutions can Holistically Support Students

# Prevalence and Impacts of Mental Health Challenges

# Prevalence: Pre-Pandemic

- Mental health challenges were **common** on college campuses before the pandemic
- In 2018-2019, the Healthy Minds Study found **more than a third** met the criteria for at least one disorder



# Prevalence: During the Pandemic

- COVID-19-related concerns, coupled with the other challenge of college, have resulted in **even** higher levels of anxiety, depression, loneliness, etc., among students
- Healthy Minds Study (Fall 2020):
  - **47 percent** indicated depression or anxiety
  - <https://healthymindsnetwork.org/>

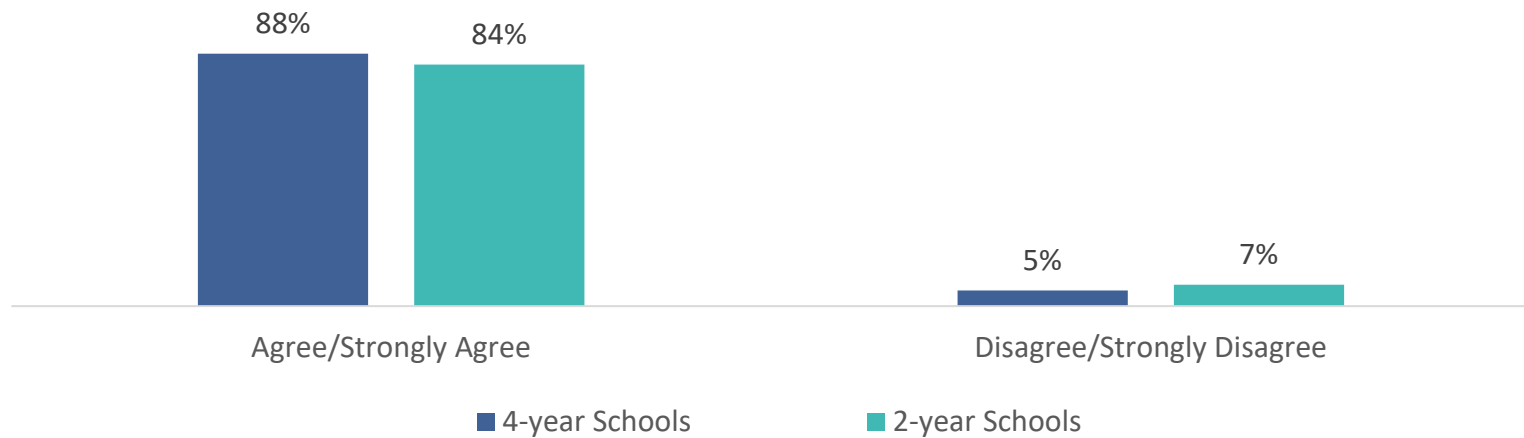


## THE HEALTHY MINDS STUDY

Fall 2020 Data Report

# Prevalence: Fall 2020 Data

Q29: The coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak of 2020 added to my level of stress, anxiety, or depression.\*



\*Responses indicating 'Neutral' are not shown

# Diving Deeper in SFWS Fall 2021

- Added four new questions to calculate likelihood of generalized anxiety disorder and/or depressive disorders
- PHQ-2: Patient Health Questionnaire-2
- GAD-2: Generalized Anxiety Disorder 2-item Scale

# PHQ-2: Patient Health Questionnaire-2

- Functions as a screener for depression in a “first-step” approach
- Respondents were asked: Over the last 7 days, how often have you been bothered by...
  - Having little interest or pleasure in doing things?
  - Feeling down, depressed, or hopeless?

If score is **3 or greater**, diagnosis of major depressive disorder is **likely**.



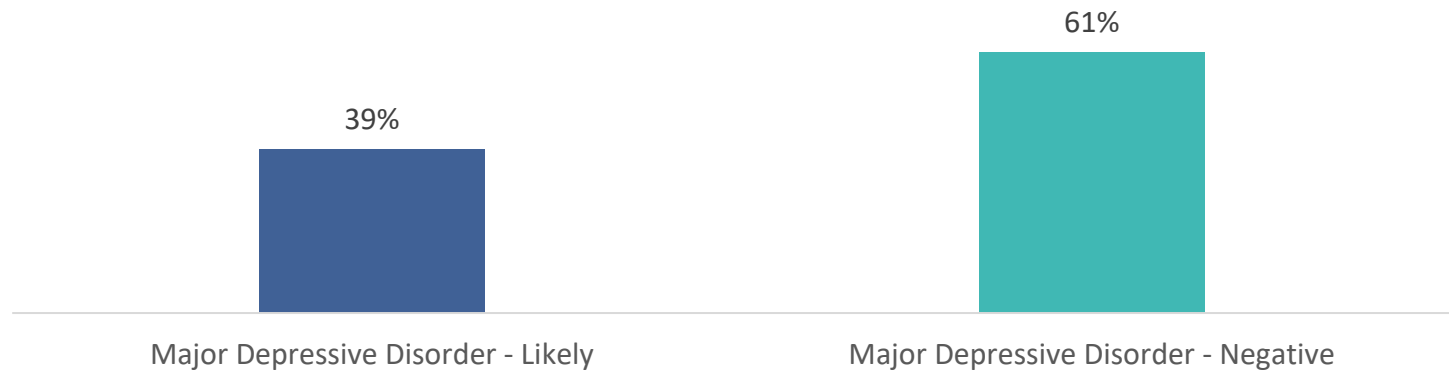
# GAD-2: Generalized Anxiety Disorder 2-item Scale

- Used to screen for generalized anxiety (GAD) by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and other orgs
- Similar to PHQ-2, students were asked: Over the last 7 days, how often have you been bothered by...
  - Feeling nervous, anxious, or on edge?
  - Not being able to stop or control worrying?

If score is **3 or greater**, diagnosis of generalized anxiety disorder is **likely**.

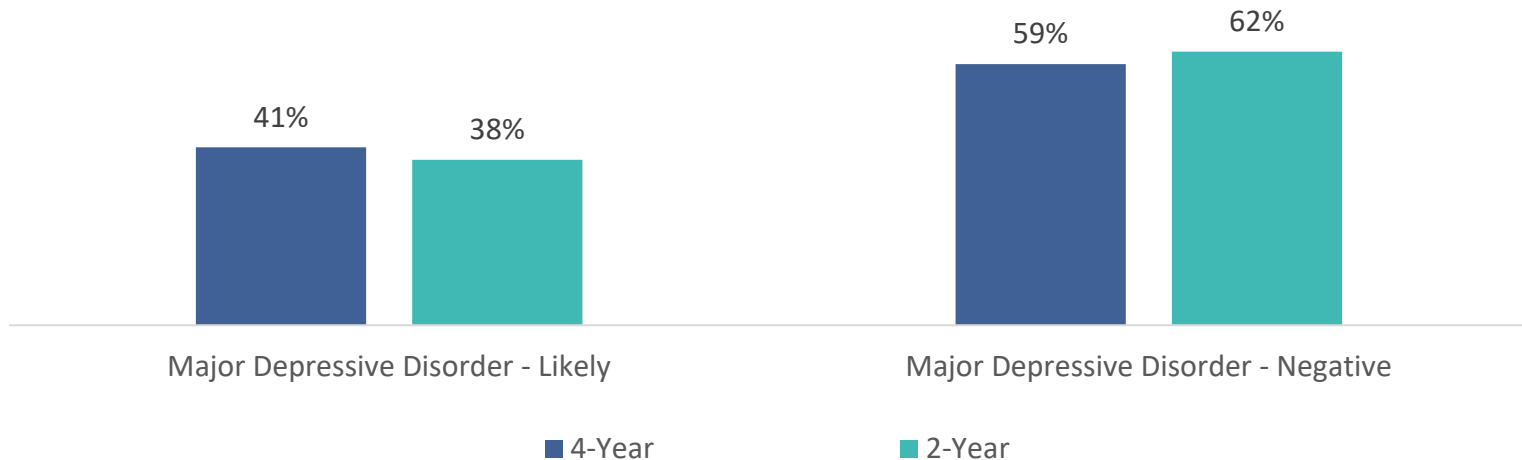
# Prevalence of Depression: Fall 2021 Data (Overall)

Q80-81: Patient Health Questionnaire-2 (PHQ-2)



# Prevalence of Depression: Fall 2021 Data (By Sector)

Q80-81: Patient Health Questionnaire-2 (PHQ-2)



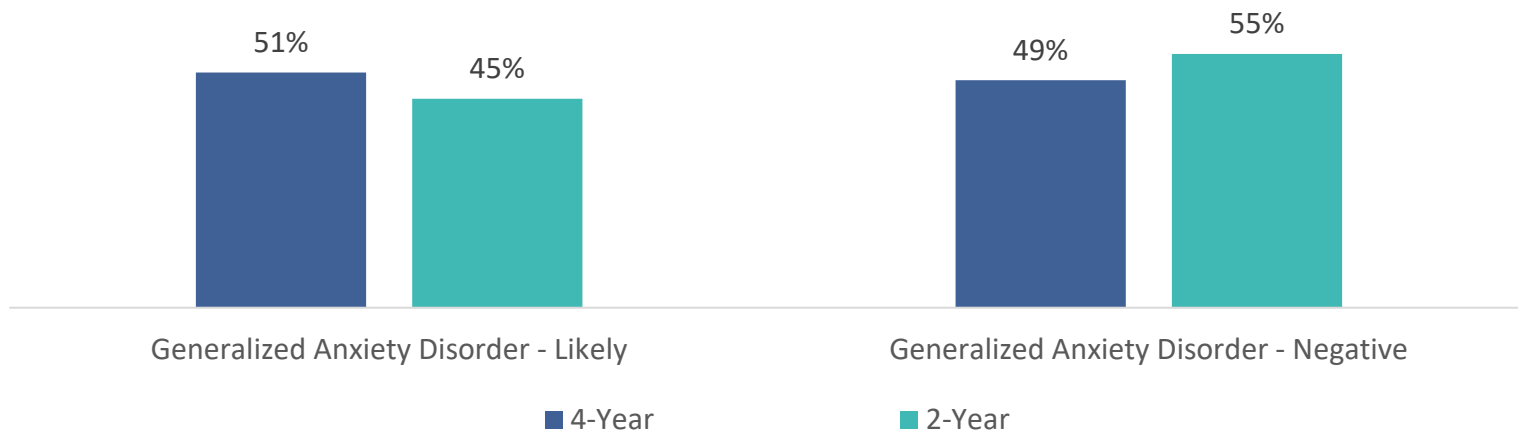
# Prevalence of Anxiety: Fall 2021 Data (Overall)

Q82-83: Generalized Anxiety Disorder 2-item Scale (GAD-2)\*



# Prevalence of Anxiety: Fall 2021 Data (By Sector)

Q82-83: Generalized Anxiety Disorder 2-item Scale (GAD-2)\*



# Prevalence: Other Sources of Data – Hope Center

Hope Center for Community, College, and Justice found that:

- **More than one in three students** were experiencing moderate to severe anxiety in fall 2020
- **Similar levels** experienced moderate to severe depression
- Students with COVID-19 infections are **1.4x more likely** to struggle with their mental health
- [hope4college.com](https://hope4college.com)



For College, Community, and Justice  
HOPE4COLLEGE.COM

**#REALCOLLEGE 2021:  
BASIC NEEDS INSECURITY DURING  
THE ONGOING PANDEMIC**

March 31, 2021

# Prevalence: At-Risk Students

- First-generation students ↑
- Students with dependents ↑
- Students experiencing basic needs insecurities ↑

Additionally, we have found the following groups to be at **higher** risk:

- Students with part- or full-time employment
- Parenting students

# Consequences of Mental Health Struggles

## **Impacts include:**

- Energy levels and productivity
- Cognitive ability
- Relationships with friends, family, and peers
- Academic performance
- Stopping out of school



Research to Practice:  
How Institutions can Holistically Support Students

# Research to Practice: Mental Health Supports

**Without their normal social support networks available, many students struggling with stress and anxiety need access to mental health support.**

## Problem

In addition to the normal pressure of balancing school, work, and family obligations, students struggle with keeping their focus on academics during this pandemic. Social distancing and quarantines further disrupt formerly reliable networks of support, leaving students vulnerable to mental health challenges.

## Solution

Institutions can provide students with mental health support, such as access to free or reduced-cost mental health services, medical counseling, mental health teleconferencing, and virtual support groups. They can enhance on-campus offerings or partner with local organizations to provide these services.

# Research to Practice: Faculty/Staff Training

**Students with mental health challenges and basic needs insecurities can be difficult to spot, but they need to be seen by their institution.**

## Problem

Few college administrators are trained to identify the signs of mental health challenges, and food and housing insecurity. Unseen by their institution, these students' needs can go unmet, making student success more difficult.

## Solution

Offer professional development for faculty and staff to help them recognize signs of mental health challenges and basic needs insecurity and learn how to direct students to appropriate support services on campus.

# Research to Practice: Public Assistance

**Institutions need to direct students to public assistance programs for which they may be eligible.**

## Problem

Students may not know to seek help from public assistance programs for which they may be eligible and, therefore, may endure unneeded hardships or stop out of college when assistance may be available.

## Solution

Institutions can direct students who may have a zero Expected Family Contribution to public access programs like the Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP), TANF, or public housing assistance. Colleges can also help students complete these applications and answer common questions.

# Research to Practice: Housing Solutions

**Students need safe, reliable housing before they can reach their full academic potential.**

## Problem

Many students are housing insecure, even homelessness. These conditions are correlated with increased risk of anxiety and depression. The need to secure housing can conflict with their academic responsibilities.

## Solution

Institutions can address housing insecurity and homelessness by partnering with local housing authorities to offer housing vouchers; working with community organizations to build housing; and advocating for state programs supporting these vulnerable students.

# Research to Practice: Parenting Students

**Students who support other family members while they are in college need special considerations.**

## Problem

Students who support family members while they are in college may have narrower windows of time to interact with colleges, may lack aid packages that are sensitive to the true costs they encounter, and encounter mental health challenges at higher rates.

## Solution

Train faculty, staff, and on-campus mental health providers on the unique experiences of student caregivers. This training can foster a culture of empathy and caring for students. Ensuring affordable, reliable access to childcare is particularly important for parenting students. Institutions can provide this or assist students in locating and applying for resources to pay for childcare.

# Research to Practice: Traumatic Finances

**Students often describe their finances as “traumatic”; those living on the edge need timely help in emergencies.**

## Problem

Inadequate financial security can threaten continuous enrollment as students stop out to address financial crises.

## Solution

Implement emergency aid programs that help students overcome temporary financial obstacles, such as car repairs, gaps in daycare coverage, rent assistance when roommates leave, and utility bill spikes.

# Research to Practice: Bureaucratic Burden

**Students need to find help with decisions with minimal shuttling between institutional offices.**

## Problem

Students, especially those new to higher education, may not know the appropriate office to contact for advice and information. The more students are directed to different areas, the greater likelihood the student will give up on getting support.

## Solution

Institutions can cross-train student-facing staff so that common questions can be answered by multiple service areas. These cross-trained personnel would also be able to direct the student to the appropriate person for the more specific issues.



# Research to Practice: One-Stop Resource Centers

**Students need a simple, transparent, and comprehensive location for information about available resources.**

## Problem

Students struggle to find information about available resources and may make enrollment decisions without accessing resources available to them.

## Solution

Many institutions have created a one-stop resource center where students can learn about beneficial resources. This simplifies the message to students and makes it easier for college staff and faculty to refer students to support services.

# Research to Practice: Crisis-Support Teams

**Students need timely and holistic institutional support when they are in crisis.**

## Problem

Students in crisis will often drop out of college unless swift, holistic institutional support is provided.

## Solution

Build on-campus crisis-support teams to provide case management for students having trouble with their mental health, basic needs, and other challenges.

# Trellis Foundation: Request for Proposals

## **Mental Wellbeing: A Basic Need for Postsecondary Students**

- Texas schools only
- Awarding 5-10 grants of up to \$200,000 each
- Work begins mid-2022 and ends mid-2024
- Grantees to serve as part of a Learning Cohort
- Goals for cohort:
  - Increased understanding by staff and/or faculty of student mental health
  - Better student outcomes
  - Differentiation of student mental health and wellbeing services

# Trellis Foundation: Request for Proposals, cont'd

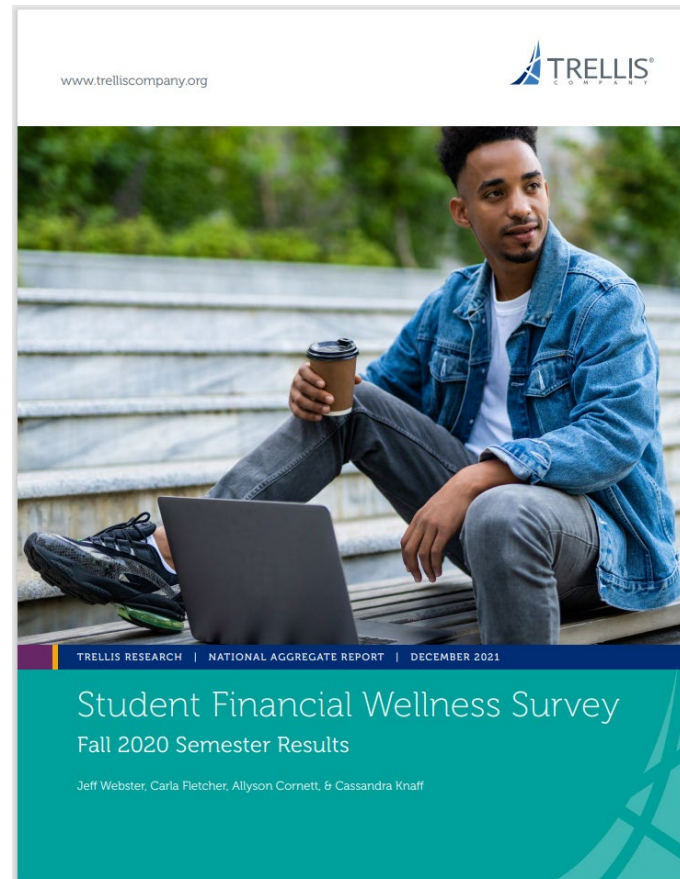
## **Mental Wellbeing: A Basic Need for Postsecondary Students**

- Additional information and answers to questions will be provided via webinar on January 28, 2022, at 11:00am (CST).
- Please contact Jenny Achilles, [jenny.achilles@trelliscompany.org](mailto:jenny.achilles@trelliscompany.org) for more information.

<https://www.trellisfoundation.org/grant-information/>

# Fall 2020 Aggregate Report: Now Available!

[www.trelliscompany.org/SFWS-2021/](http://www.trelliscompany.org/SFWS-2021/)



# Thank you!

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