

Adolescent and Young Adult Mental Health is Better in States that Mandate More School Mental Health Policies

Stephanie Spera and Shannon M. Monnat

Mental illness affects 1 in 5 adolescents in the U.S., and childhood mental health problems often become more severe in young adulthood. Schools are an essential resource for adolescent mental health because children spend more of their awake hours in school than in any other setting. States vary in their mandates related to school mental health policies. The map below shows the relationship between state-level wellbeing among adolescents and young adults (ages 15-24) and states' rankings on mandated school-based mental health policies. States with more mandated policies overall and those that mandate school-based mental health centers and professional development in suicide prevention have better adolescent and young adult mental wellbeing outcomes.

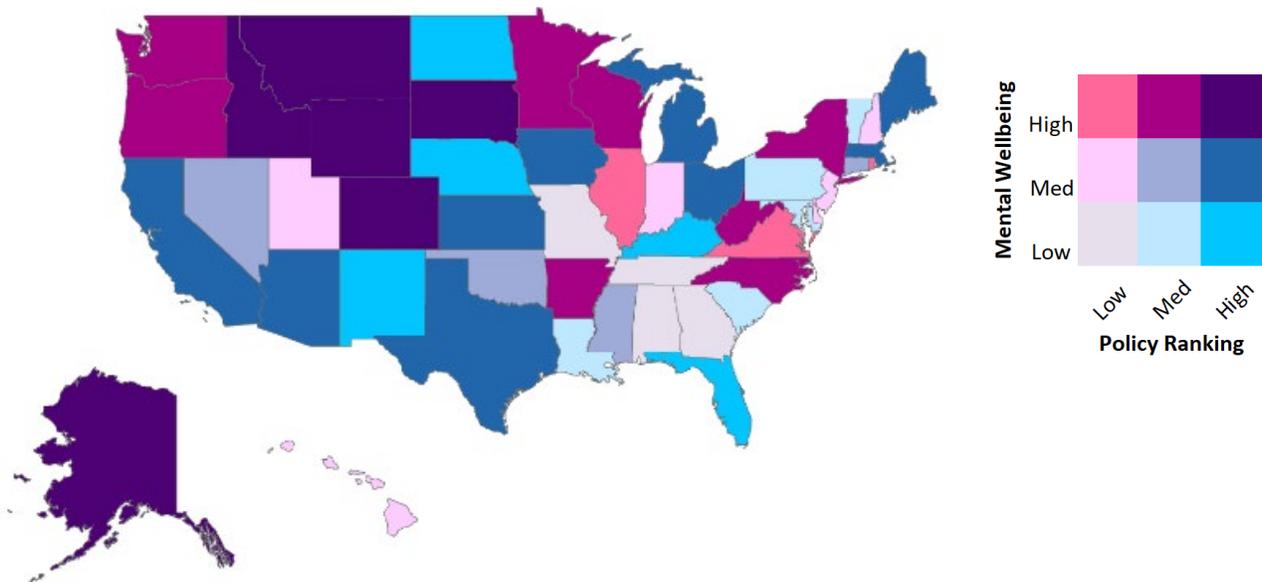


Figure 1. States with More Mandated School Mental Health Policies have Better Adolescent and Young Adult Mental Health Outcomes

Note: The wellbeing index includes the rates of suicide, substance abuse, and major depressive disorder among ages 15-24. State mandated mental health policies include school-based mental health centers; family engagement programs; primary and secondary school counseling; professional development in suicide prevention, trauma, and mental health; early identification; anti-bullying; and tiered behavioral interventions. *Data Source:* The state suicide rate is from CDC WONDER. Substance abuse and major depressive disorder rates come from Mental Health America's Youth Prevalence data. Data on state-mandated school mental health policies comes from the National Association for School Boards of Education (NASBE).

About the Authors

Stephanie Spera is a graduate of the Masters in Public Administration and International Relations programs at the Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs at Syracuse University (smspera@syr.edu). Shannon Monnat is the Lerner Chair for Public Health Promotion and Associate Professor of Sociology in the Maxwell School at Syracuse University (smmonnat@maxwell.syr.edu).