

Student Knowledge and Utilization of Academic Support and Health Services, Berkeley High School, 2007

Summary

Background: In May 2007, the Coordinated School Health Council — a collaboration of the Berkeley High School administration, staff, students, and parents, the Berkeley Unified School District, and the City of Berkeley Public Health Division — surveyed a random selection of BHS students to assess their ability to access resources on campus. The council looked at reasons and strategies to integrate health services into the overall infrastructure of the school. This survey was part of the "coordinated school health" project, and was designed to identify ways to increase coordination and collaboration between the school and the City of Berkeley, Berkeley High School health center.

The survey asked questions regarding:

1. **Knowledge** of how to access academic tutoring and mental health related support
2. **Awareness and utilization** of on-campus academic and health related support services, and
3. **Barriers** to accessing on-campus academic and health related support services.

Methods: A random sample of 383 students was selected to take the survey. The survey was developed with extensive student input. Students were notified in advance of their selection, were asked to participate, and completed the survey in the library during the school day.

Results: 312 students completed the survey. Detailed results of the survey can be obtained by reading the extended report at the City of Berkeley website <http://www.ci.berkeley.ca.us/ContentDisplay.aspx?id=13446> (Public Health Division Reports and Statistics). Some of the key findings are listed below:

Academic Support Services

- Approximately 82% of students stated that they knew how to access academic support services.
- Approximately half of students reported having used academic support services, and nearly half stated that they didn't believe they needed the services.
- The most common means of accessing academic support services was the Student Learning Center, followed by teachers and after-school programs, particularly for non-white students.
- Almost two-thirds of Latino students report having used an academic support service, and there were race/ethnic preferences to specific programs such as Y-Scholars and small school tutoring programs.
- As a barrier to using academic support services, 43% reported not having time or availability for after-school programs.

Health Center Services

- Approximately 60% of students stated ever having used the Health Center.
- A greater percentage of African American and White students used the Health Center than other race/ethnic groups.



- Approximately 25% of students reported using a health education services and 20% reported ever having used a mental health service.
- Approximately 30% of students stated they didn't know where to go to get help for mental health issues.
- The most common means of accessing mental health services was through Health Center staff and academic counselors, followed by friends and teachers

Outreach to students

- The most effective means identified for disseminating information about services to students, were class presentations, announcements in class by teachers, and the school newspaper.

CONCLUSIONS/LESSONS LEARNED

This survey process showed us that a methodologically rigorous survey of Berkeley High School can be feasibly carried out with the engagement, cooperation, and pooling of resources by the High School administration, students, teachers, and parents, the BUSD, the City of Berkeley Public Health Division and other partners.

The following findings provide useful planning information for BHS staff:

- Eighteen percent of students (approximately 558 of the 3103 total student body) have little knowledge on how to access academic support services therefore additional outreach and education about the services is still needed.
- The survey suggests that classroom-based dissemination of information is most effective
- The survey also identifies that lack of time or availability after school are still the greatest barriers to utilizing after-school services.
- There is a high level of utilization of the Health Center (60%), yet there is a need for additional outreach to Asian and Pacific Islander students, who still use the services less than their counterparts.
- Students who have not used the Health Center most often report “not needing services” as their reason.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The primary recommendation is to disseminate this report to key stakeholders, and get feedback on the findings and implications. The stakeholder feedback and findings from this study will be used for program planning to improve utilization of academic support, mental health and health programs at Berkeley High School. Consideration should be given to regularly repeating this survey as a means to assess the progress of interventions or to evaluate the need to make changes to existing programs.

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