



# The California Mental Health Service Authority Survey

## LACCD Results, Fall 2016

### INTRODUCTION

The Los Angeles Community College District (LACCD) conducted a voluntary and confidential web-based mental health survey in Fall 2016 in order to assess the mental health needs of LACCD students. The survey used was the California Mental Health Services Authority (CalMHSA) Survey, developed by the RAND Corp. in collaboration with the CalMHSA program higher education partners using questions from standardized and valid measures of student mental health.

### NUMBER OF SURVEYS

The Los Angeles Community College District (LACCD) employed the CALMHSA Survey in the Fall of 2016 in order to complete a comprehensive needs assessment of LACCD students. The survey was available on line for students from October 31 to December 16, 2016. A total of 2,754 students completed the survey. Table 1 shows the number and proportion of students enrolled at each college and the number and proportion of students that submitted an on-line survey. The difference in percentage of students who completed a survey and percentage of students enrolled at each college varies from .2% to 3.8%; this difference suggests that the proportion of surveys returned appears to reflect the proportion of students enrolled at LACCD colleges.

**Table 1. Number of Student Surveys by College**

	City	East	Harbor	Mission	Pierce	South-west	Trade-Tech	Valley	West	Missing Surveys	Total
*2016 Student Enrollment	16,367	28,797	9,157	10,244	20,335	6,592	13,892	17,844	11,117		134,345
	12.2%	21.4%	6.8%	7.6%	15.1%	4.9%	10.3%	13.3%	8.3%		
Number of Surveys	350	695	199	120	397	128	224	341	233	67	2754
	12.7%	25.2%	7.2%	4.4%	14.4%	4.6%	8.2%	12.4%	8.5%	2.4%	
Difference in % points	+0.5%	+3.8%	+0.4%	-3.2%	Δ-0.7	-0.3%	-2.1%	-0.9%	+0.2%		

\*Data from: 2016 First Census Credit Enrollment reports

## STUDENT DEMOGRAPHICS

The majority of the students that completed the 2016 CALMHSA Survey were under 25 years of age (59%), female (69.5%), and Hispanic (55%). Table 2 shows ages, gender, and ethnicity information for students completing the survey and student enrollment information from 2015. When comparing the surveys completed with the 2015 enrollment data, the table shows that a larger proportion of females completed the survey than are enrolled at LACCD colleges. This is a common finding in all survey research; generally response rates are higher for females. In addition, there was a larger proportion of students who selected an “other” ethnic identity than the students surveyed in 2015. Many of the students cited that they identified in the “other” category because they belonged to more than one group.

**Table 2. Student Demographic Information**

<b>Students Age (N=2,687)</b>			
	<b>N</b>	<b>Percent of Sample</b>	<b>Percent of 2015 Student Enrollment*</b>
Younger than 20	432	16%	24%
20-24	865	33%	35%
25-34	787	29%	24%
35 and older	603	22%	17%
<b>Gender (N=2,726)</b>			
	<b>N</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>2015 Student Enrollment*</b>
Male	809	30%	43%
Female	1,906	69.5%	57%
Other	11	0.5%	
<b>How would you identify yourself? (N=2,706)</b>			
	<b>N</b>	<b>Percent of Sample</b>	<b>Percent of 2015 Student Enrollment*</b>
Asian	263	10%	12%
<i>Cambodian</i>	<i>(6)</i>	<i>(2%)</i>	
<i>Chinese</i>	<i>(81)</i>	<i>(32%)</i>	
<i>Fijian</i>	<i>(1)</i>	<i>(0.5%)</i>	
<i>Filipino</i>	<i>(81)</i>	<i>(31%)</i>	
<i>Guamanian or Chamorro</i>	<i>(3)</i>	<i>(1%)</i>	
<i>Japanese</i>	<i>(12)</i>	<i>(5%)</i>	
<i>Korean</i>	<i>(37)</i>	<i>(14%)</i>	
<i>Laotian</i>	<i>(3)</i>	<i>(1%)</i>	
<i>Samoaan</i>	<i>(2)</i>	<i>(0.5%)</i>	
<i>Thai</i>	<i>(4)</i>	<i>(1%)</i>	
<i>Vietnamese</i>	<i>(33)</i>	<i>(12%)</i>	
Black	264	10%	13%
Hispanic	1,482	55%	57%
White	381	14%	16%
Other**	316	11%	2%

\*Data obtained from: <http://www.laccd.edu/Departments/EPIE/Research/Pages/All-Reports.aspx>

\*\*Other responses include: Mixed race/biracial, African, Mexican, and Middle Eastern/Egyptian/Persian/Iranian.

Many students who completed the survey stated that they identified with at least one special population (n=2,055; Table 3). Most often students identified as being a first generation college student (n=1101) and about a third identified as an ethnic minority (n=648). This data demonstrates some of the diversity of LACCD students.

**Table 3. Students Belonging To Special Populations**

<b>Do you identify with any of the following populations? (N=2,754*)</b>		
	<b>N</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
LGBTQ	356	13%
First Generation College Student	1,101	40%
Foster Care Youth	83	3%
Ethnic Minority	648	24%
Student Veteran	58	2%
Homeless Youth	70	3%
Students with Disabilities	319	12%
Students who are Parents	509	18%
Other**	208	8%

\*Students may identify with 1 (n=1,244) or more than 1 population (n=811). There were 699 students (25%) that did not identify with any special population.

\*\*Other responses include: Abuse survivor, Students with mental health disorders/problems, Immigrants, Undocumented, Low-income household, Older adult, Homeless Adults/Seniors, International Student, and Ex-convict.

## STUDENT CHARACTERISTICS

The majority of the students that completed the CALMHSA Survey were full time students (57%) and had the goal to transfer to a 4-year college (60%; Table 4). Figure 1 provides further description of LACCD student characteristics. Students who participated in the survey had been at their college more than 1 semester (80%), had taken a class within the last year (98%), and had English as a primary language (78%). Some of these student characteristics do not mirror the 2015 student enrollment, which suggested that only 27% of the students were enrolled full time and that students had varying academic goals. Students who participated in the survey tended to be more engaged with their campus. This suggests that the students who responded to the CALMHSA Survey are not reflective of the entire LACCD student population and caution should be taken when interpreting these results.

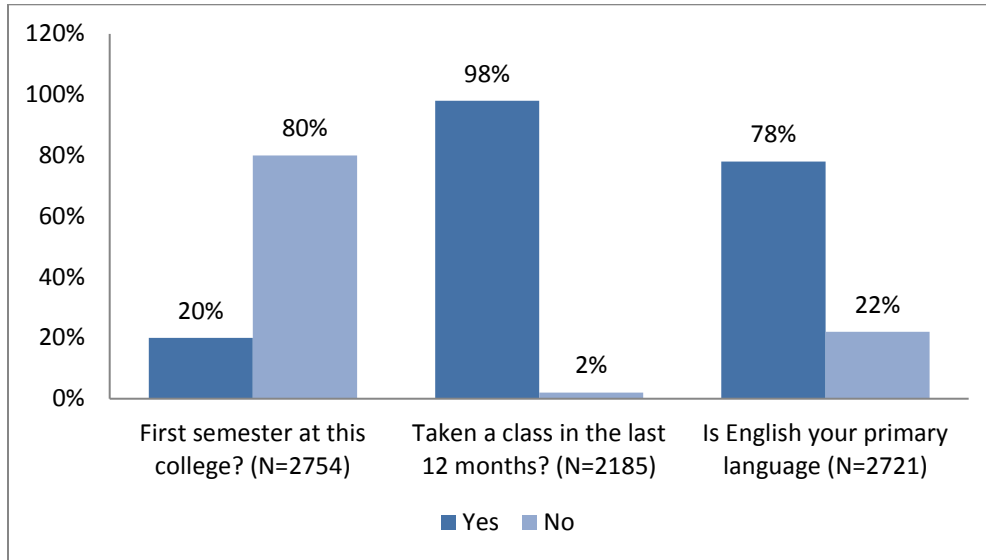
**Table 4. Students' Enrollment Type & Primary Academic Goal**

<b>Student Status (N=2709)</b>			
	<b>N</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>2015 Student Enrollment*</b>
Full Time	1,548	57%	27%
Part Time	1,161	43%	73%
<b>Primary Academic Goal (N=2723)</b>			
	<b>N</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>2015 Student Enrollment*</b>
Certificate	141	5%	3%
Associate Degree	750	27%	7%
Transfer to a 4-year college	1,619	60%	51%
Acquire/Update job skills	52	2%	13%
Educational Development	56	2%	12%
Other**	105	4%	14%

\*Data obtained from: <http://www.laccd.edu/Departments/EPIE/Research/Pages/All-Reports.aspx>

\*\*Other includes student who have more than 1 goal, students for are taking prerequisite courses for another program or graduate school, personal enrichment, to gain credits, and students who do not have any established goals.

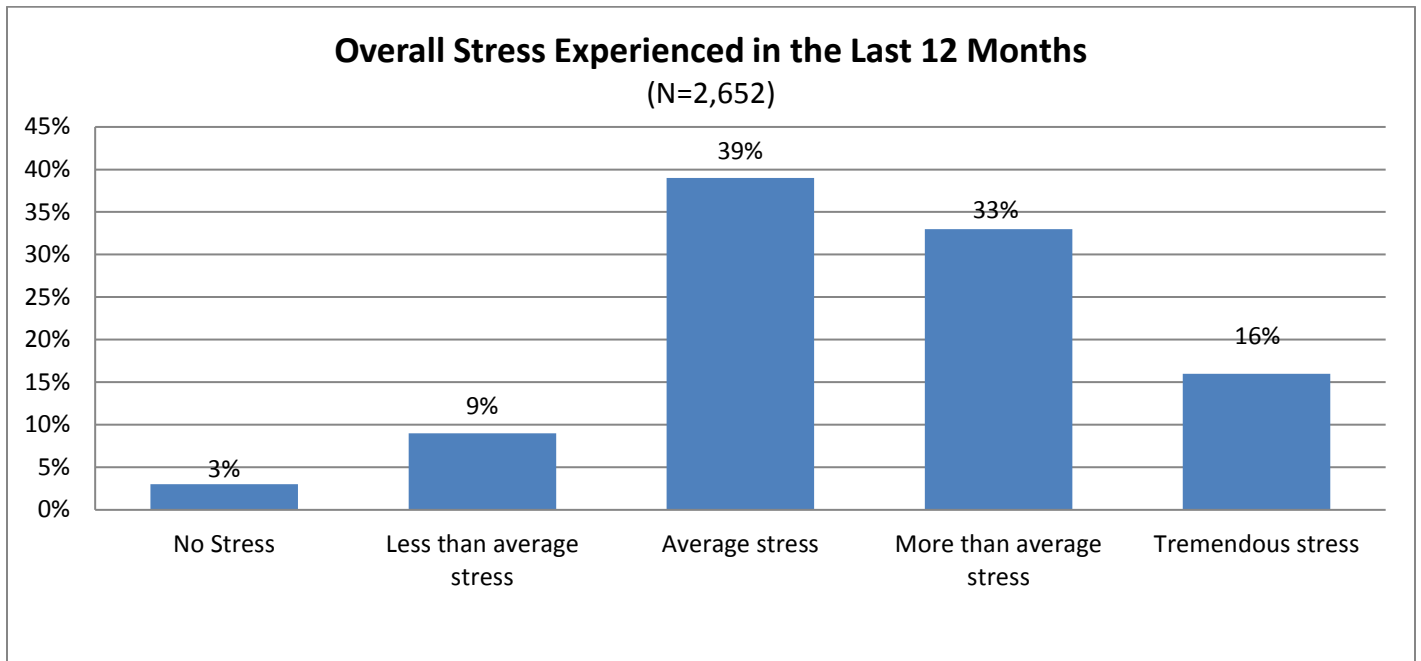
**Figure 1. Student Characteristics**



**STUDENT MENTAL HEALTH**

Mental health is a growing concern facing students that could affect success in college. The CALMHSA Survey found that LACCD students often reported experiencing stress. Nearly half of students (49%) reported experiencing more than average to tremendous stress levels within the last year (Figure 2). When further exploring how LACDD students felt in the last month, many reported feeling nervous (28%), restless and fidgety (26%), and that everything was an effort (32%) all or most of the time (Table 5). In fact, similar trends emerge when these students were asked about these same feeling over the past year. This may suggest that these feelings are persistent over time.

**Figure 2. Student Stress Levels**



**Table 5. How Students Have Felt in the Last Month and in the Last Year**

	In the last 30 Days			In the last 12 months		
<b>How often did you feel nervous?</b>						
All or most of the time	773	28%	N=2,729	773	28%	N=2,722
Some of the time	984	36%		928	34%	
None to a little bit of the time	972	36%		1,021	38%	
<b>How often did you feel hopeless?</b>						
All or most of the time	465	17%	N=2,705	474	18%	N=2,689
Some of the time	581	22%		567	21%	
None to a little bit of the time	1,659	61%		1,648	61%	
<b>How often did you feel restless and fidgety?</b>						
All or most of the time	702	26%	N=2,704	637	24%	N=2,692
Some of the time	726	27%		697	26%	
None to a little bit of the time	1,276	47%		1,358	50%	
<b>How often did you feel so depressed that nothing could cheer you up?</b>						
All or most of the time	351	13%	N=2,694	382	14%	N=2,679
Some of the time	389	14%		449	17%	
None to a little bit of the time	1,954	73%		1,848	69%	
<b>How often did you feel that everything was an effort</b>						
All or most of the time	860	32%	N=2,701	797	30%	N=2,692
Some of the time	665	25%		654	24%	
None to a little bit of the time	1,176	43%		1,241	46%	
<b>How often did you feel worthless</b>						
All or most of the time	354	13%	N=2,701	375	14%	N=2,673
Some of the time	325	12%		368	14%	
None to a little bit of the time	2,022	75%		1,930	72%	

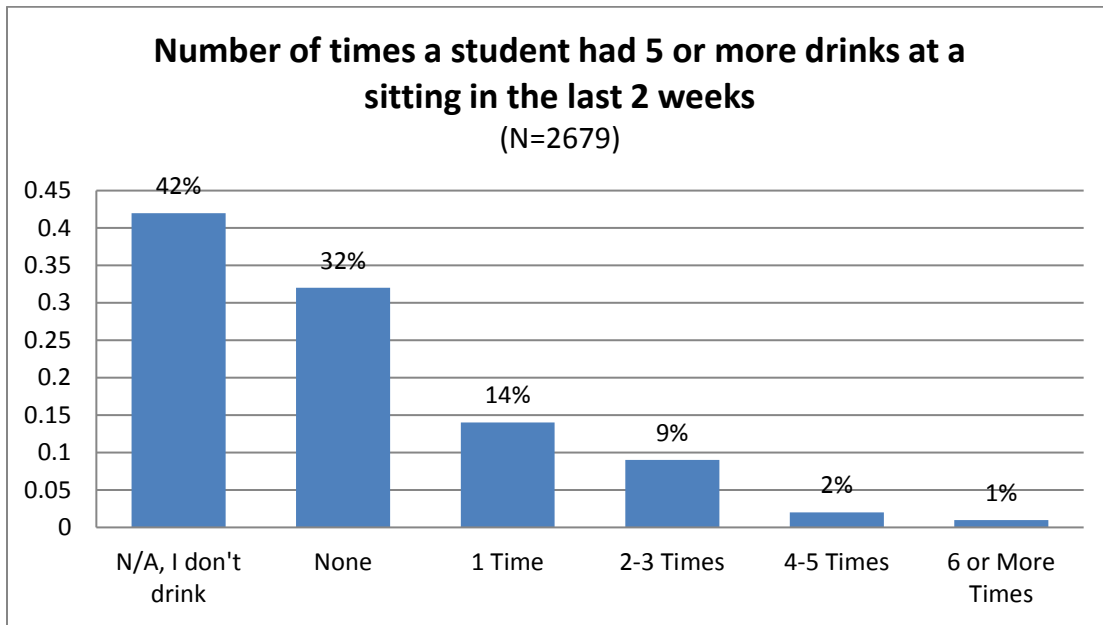
Not only are feelings of stress and nervousness persistent over time, but they also affected students' academic performance. In fact, 33% of students surveyed reported feelings of depression and 41% reported feelings of anxiety in the past year that affected their performance in school (Table 6). More than half of students (52%) also endorsed that stress was a factor in them either receiving a lower exam or course grade, dropping a class, or by causing a significant disruption that resulted in a leave of absence. Conversely, LACCD students rarely reported alcohol (4%) as a problem that affected their academic work. Additionally, 42% of students reported that they do not drink at all and an additional 32% of students reported that did not have 5 or more drinks of alcohol in a sitting over the last 2 weeks (Figure 3). The data suggest that depression, anxiety, and stress are the largest factors that affect student academic performance.

**Table 6. How Students' Academic Performance was Affected in the Last Year**

	Did not happen to me	Experience this, but academic performance not affected	Experience this and it affected my academic performance*	Total
Alcohol Use	2246	362	94	2702
	83%	13%	4%	
Anxiety	896	695	1108	2699
	33%	26%	41%	
Death of a friend or family member	1961	311	412	2684
	73%	12%	15%	
Depression	1178	609	904	2691
	44%	23%	33%	
Eating Disorder/ Problem	2029	408	254	2691
	75%	16%	9%	
Stress	391	910	1411	2712
	14%	34%	52%	

\*Students were affected by either receiving a lower exam grade, receiving a lower course grade, dropping the class or getting an incomplete, or by a significant disruption that caused a leave of absence.

**Figure 3. Students' Drinking Habits**



Although mental health affects everyone, there are populations that present with higher prevalence rates of experiencing problems. At LACCD, the data showed similar trends. A 2 x 2 Chi Square analysis was conducted in order to see if membership within a specific population placed students at greater risk of experiencing problems that affected their academic performance. The analysis showed that the proportion of students whose academic performance was affected by anxiety, depression, or stress was significantly higher if they identify as belonging to these groups: lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, & questioning (LGBTQ), first generation college students, foster care youth, ethnic minority, homeless youth, or students with disabilities (Table 7). Homeless youth appear to be the most at-risk population. In addition to experiencing higher rates of depression, anxiety, and stress that affect academic performance, homeless youth are significantly more likely to be affected by alcohol use, death of a friend or family member, and/or an eating disorder/problem.

**Table 7. Proportion of Students Whose Academic Performance was Affected by Mental Health Problems (by Population)**

		Depression	Anxiety	Stress
LGBTQ	Yes	49%	56%	63%
	No	31%	39%	50%
First generation college students	Yes	37%	46%	57%
	No	31%	38%	49%
Foster care youth	Yes	52%	52%	67%
	No	33%	41%	52%
Ethnic minority	Yes	40%	47%	59%
	No	32%	39%	50%
Homeless youth	Yes	61%	57%	68%
	No	33%	41%	52%
Students with disabilities	Yes	48%	54%	61%
	No	32%	39%	51%

Students were also surveyed about how they dealt with problems (Table 8). The majority of students indicated the following statements were at least a little true: they were able to work out their problems (93%), they seek alternative solutions to problems (95%), and that they accepted mistakes as part of the learning process (96%). In contrast, 14% of students stated that they did not know where to go for help with a personal problem and 31% were unaware at all where to go on campus if they needed mental health, or other similar, services; this suggests that many students who could benefit from campus services may not know what services are available or how to access them.

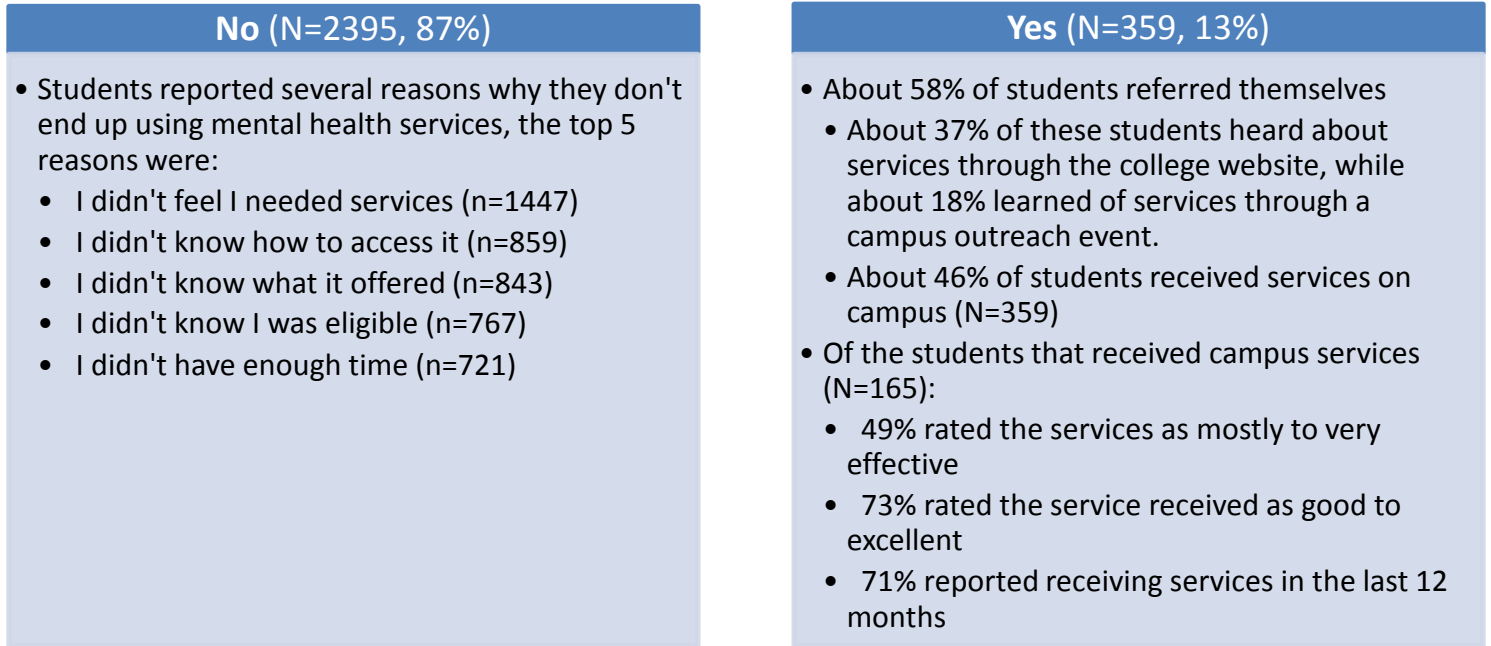
**Table 8. Students' Opinions About Personally Dealing with Problems**

	Not at all true	A little true	Pretty much true	Very much true	Total
I know where to go for help with a personal problem.	392	715	747	876	2,730
	14%	26%	28%	32%	
I try to work out problems by talking or writing about them.	522	689	785	730	2,726
	19%	25%	29%	27%	
I can work out my problems.	188	743	991	803	2,725
	7%	27%	36%	30%	
I accept mistakes as part of the learning process.	99	467	895	1,268	2,729
	4%	17%	33%	46%	
I seek alternative solutions to a problem.	133	594	1,026	964	2,717
	5%	22%	38%	35%	
When I need help, I find someone to talk with.	400	741	741	833	2,715
	15%	27%	27%	31%	
I am aware of where to go on campus if I need mental health services.	839	558	542	795	2,734
	31%	20%	20%	29%	

The majority of LACCD students surveyed (87%) indicated that they have never been referred to or used counseling services on campus (Figure 4). Although the majority of these students indicated that they did not feel they needed counseling services, many students said that they did not know they were eligible to receive services, they did not know what services were offered, and they did not know how to access those services. The survey also revealed that students who were foster care youth, homeless youth, or had disabilities were significantly more likely to be referred for services, but only students with disabilities accessed services as a higher rate. Of the students surveyed that did get referred for mental health services, 46% ended up receiving services on campus. Most students that received services on campus (73%) rated the service received as good to excellent and 49% of students rated the services as mostly to very effective.

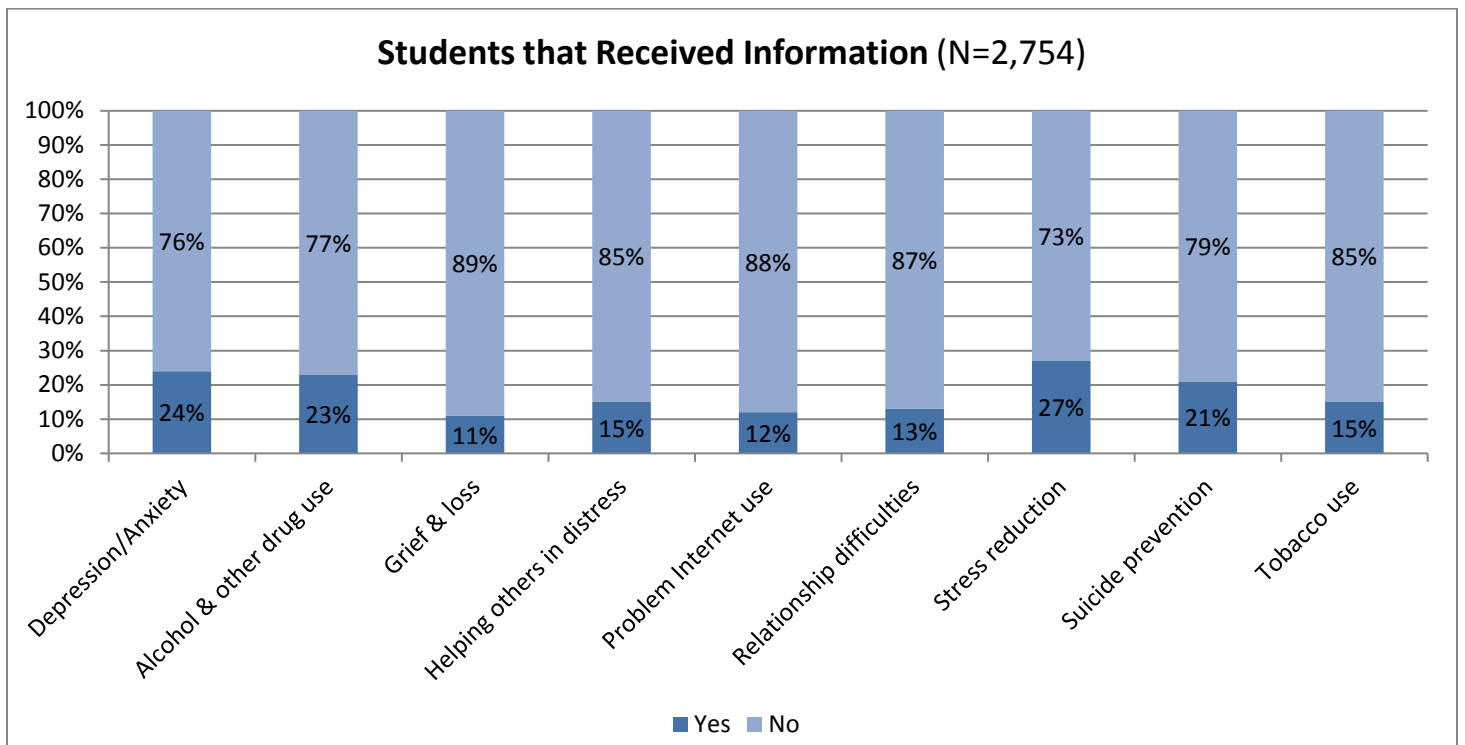
**Figure 4. Students Who Have Been Referred or Used Campus Counseling Services**

**Have ever been referred or used counseling services on campus?**



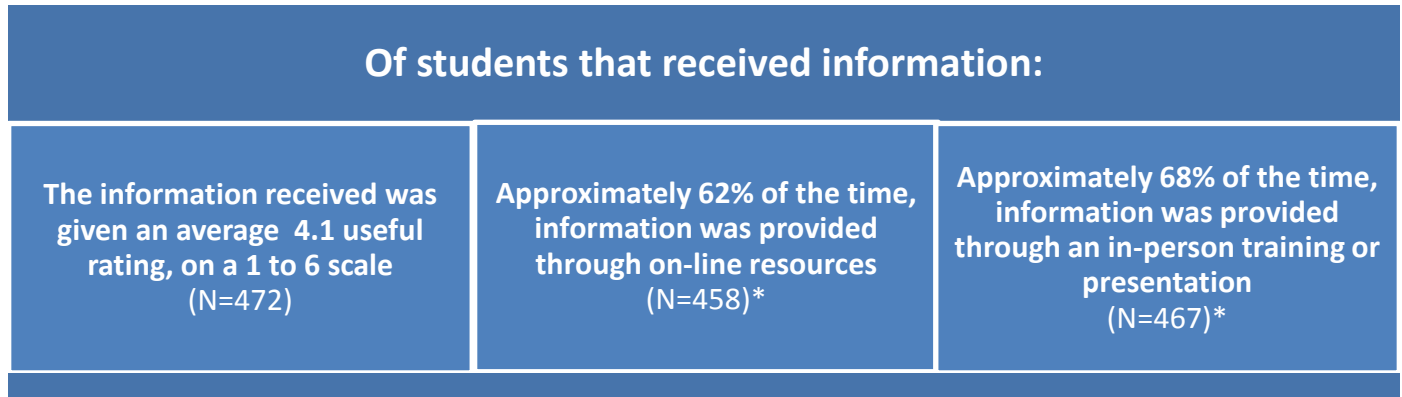
The types of mental health services that students receive can vary greatly, from receiving some general information online to going to an in-person training or presentation. The survey found that majority of students who received information sought out help for stress reduction and depression/anxiety (Figure 5), which is consistent with previous data suggesting these are major factors that affect student academic performance. When students were asked whether the information was useful on a 1 to 5 scale (1=not useful and 5=very useful), the information received was given a 4.1 useful rating on average (Figure 6).

**Figure 5. Students Who Received Information About Mental Health Problems**





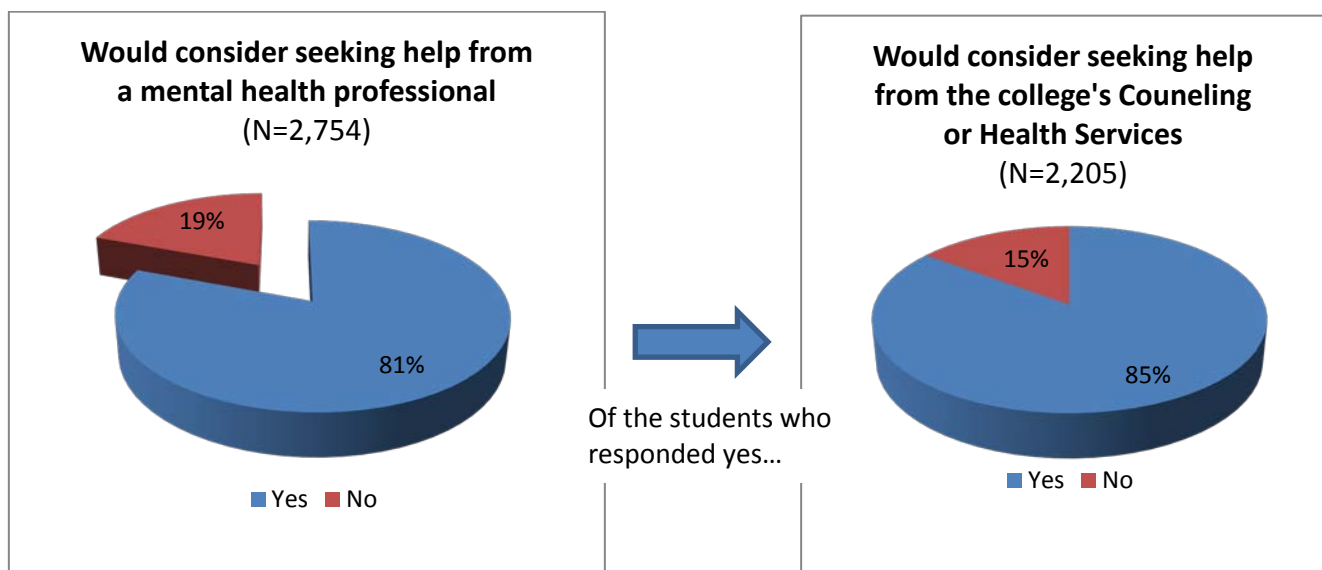
**Figure 6. Statistics From Students Who Received Mental Health Information**



\*Students may receive information in more than one modality (i.e., on-line and in-person).

Although many do not use mental health services, the majority of students surveyed (81%) indicated that they would consider seeking help from a mental health care professional (Figure 7). Furthermore, 85% of the students who are open to receiving services would consider seeking help from the colleges' Counseling or Health Services programs. This finding, along with the favorable ratings of campus services, may signify the openness of students to receive mental health services on campus.

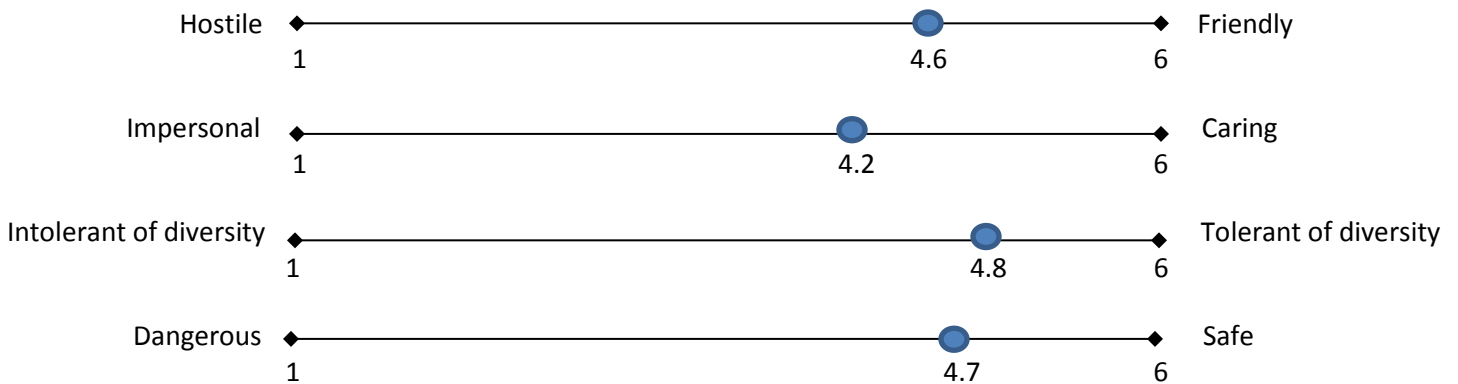
**Figure 7. Students' Help-Seeking Behavior for Mental Health Problems**



To put some of these results in context, comparisons can be made with the *CalMHSAs Student Mental Health Campus-Wide Survey, 2013 Summary Report* written by the RAND Corporation. The report provides information from 60 California Community Colleges (CCC) and all the University of California (UC) and California State University (CSU) schools. The report found that all higher education students are experiencing general levels of distress. For example, when LACCD students were asked about symptoms generally related to depression, 17% reported feelings of hopelessness all or most of the time and 13% reported feeling so depressed that nothing could cheer them up; these percentages are higher than averages across all higher education systems of 10-12% and 8-10%, respectively. Our survey also found that 13% of LACCD students were referred to or used counseling services, which is more than students at other CCCs (10%), but less often than UC (23%) and CSU (19%) students. Our survey also found that 46% of students referred to counseling received services on campus; this, again, is higher than the CCC average of 41%, but much lower than the proportion of UC (77%) and CSU (71%) students who received campus services.

Campus climate encompasses the attitudes and behavior of the faculty, administration, staff, and students on campus. How a student experiences their campus and can affect their learning. In short, students thrive in positive environments that are safe, inclusive, and have diversity. Students were asked to rate, on a spectrum from 1 to 6, how they experience their campus. Students indicated that they felt their campus was friendly, caring, tolerant of diversity, and safe (Figure 8).

Figure 8. General Campus Climate Scores (N=2,686)



In addition to a generally more positive campus climate, it appears that students have positive feelings towards their life and their future (Table 9). The majority of students agreed or strongly agreed that they lead a purposeful and meaningful life (70%), their social relationships are supportive and rewarding (66%), and that they are optimistic about their future (70%).

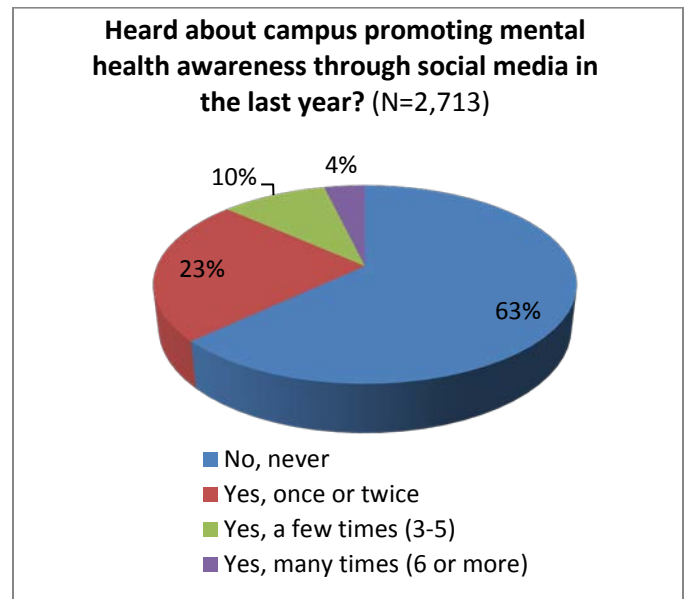
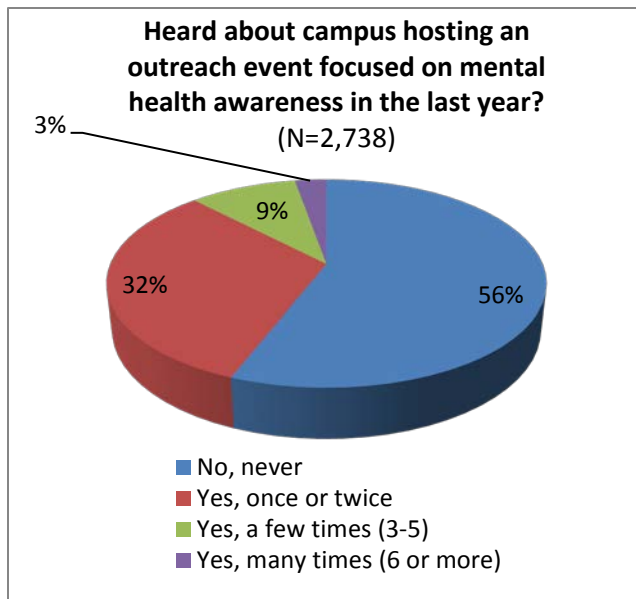
The survey also revealed some indifference with mental health issues, with about half of the students endorsing that they neither agree or disagree with several items, such as: my college provides adequate mental health counseling and support services for students (53%), my college provides effective confidential support and referral services for students needing help because of substance use, violence, or other problems (53%), and there is an emotionally supportive climate on this campus for students with mental health needs (51%). This indifference may be due to lack of awareness of mental health problems and services available on campus. In fact, one salient finding was that 23% of students did not feel that their college did a good job of getting the word out to students about the available mental health services on campus.

These findings are echoed when students were asked about various mental health campaigns on campus (Figure 9). More than half of students (56%) said that they had never heard about their campus hosting an outreach event focused on mental health awareness in the last year and 63% had never heard about their campus promoting mental health awareness through social media in the last year. This may suggest the need for more mental health awareness activities on campus and through social media outlets.

**Table 9. Students' Opinions About Mental Health and Available Services**

How much do you agree with the following statements about your college?	Disagree or strongly disagree	Neither agree or disagree	Agree or strongly agree	Total
My college provides adequate mental health counseling and support services for students.	239	1,447	1,027	2,713
	9%	53%	38%	
My college provides effective confidential support and referral services for students needing help because of substance use, violence, or other problems.	225	1,440	1,041	2,706
	8%	53%	39%	
My college emphasizes helping students with their social, emotional, & behavioral problems.	350	1,265	1,078	2,693
	13%	47%	40%	
People with mental health problems experience high levels of prejudice and discrimination at my college.	907	1,247	538	2,692
	34%	46%	20%	
Faculty members at my college are concerned about student emotional well-being.	359	1,067	1,273	2,699
	13%	40%	47%	
My college does a good job of getting the word out to students about the available mental health services on campus for students.	610	1,195	868	2,673
	23%	45%	32%	
There is an emotionally supportive climate on this campus for students with mental health needs.	266	1,395	1,043	2,704
	10%	51%	39%	
There is an emotionally supportive climate on this campus for students with substance abuse problems.	276	1,568	850	2,694
	10%	58%	32%	
There is an emotionally supportive climate on this campus for students who have been victims of abuse or other violence.	241	1,466	983	2,690
	9%	55%	36%	
I lead a purposeful and meaningful life.	247	562	1,905	2,714
	9%	21%	70%	
My social relationships are supportive and rewarding.	288	623	1,796	2,707
	11%	23%	66%	
I am engaged and interested in my daily activities	334	625	1,751	2,710
	12%	23%	65%	
I am optimistic about my future.	278	535	1,894	2,707
	10%	20%	70%	

**Figure 9. Students Who Heard About Mental Health Awareness Campaigns**



## **CONCLUSION**

---

The CALMHSA Survey suggests the need for more mental health awareness activities on campus and through social media. Many students said they would be willing to receive mental health services and access service on campus, but did not know if they were eligible to receive services, what services were offered, and how to access those services. Students who did receive information from their campus mostly sought out help for stress reduction and depression/anxiety, and they found the information they received useful. Despite the fact that most students do not use mental health services, the majority of students indicated openness to seeking help and accessing the colleges' Counseling or Health Services programs. This finding, along with the favorable ratings of campus services, may signify the openness of students to receive mental health services on campus and the need for more information regarding what services are available and how to access them.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

---

To help the LACCD support students with mental health concerns, there are a variety of recommendations for the District. Initially, the LACCD should assess its current resources and create an inventory of programs available and their capacity to serve students. This inventory of programs may help assess whether the community colleges have adequate and comprehensive mental health services available and accessible to students, which should include counseling services and wellness programs.

In addition to services on campuses, it is important to have the ability to refer students to local organizations within the community. Having information available to students, faculty, and staff on various resources (e.g., health insurance access, counseling centers, hotline numbers, etc.) that may be useful for students with concerns about mental health is important, as it may help students quickly meet their immediate needs. Information can be provided through various mediums, including social media, college websites, district websites, flyers, or campus events. These actions may also show students their college's commitment to their success and help foster a more positive campus climate.

It may also be necessary to raise awareness about mental illness and wellness for all students. A responsible campus should engage in awareness campaigns that may eliminate misconceptions and stigma related to mental illness and increase help-seeking behavior for students with concerns. As part of this effort to increase awareness, it may be useful to conduct training programs for faculty and staff that often interact with students that will provide basic information regarding mental health issues, how and where to refer students who may benefit from services, and protocols for how to help students in crisis who might be a danger to themselves or others. Continuing efforts such as these may help provide a more supportive environment in which students can thrive.