



WICHE



Western Interstate Commission
for Higher Education

Mental Health on College Campuses During a Pandemic

June 1, 2021

What is WICHE?

Western Interstate Commission
for Higher Education



WICHE – Behavioral Health

- Behavioral Health Unit – 1955
 - *Believed that students needed a healthy mind to succeed in post secondary education.*
- Three Focus Areas:
 - Systems Improvement
 - Workforce Development
 - Psychology Doctoral Internships – 6 states
 - Mountain Plains Mental Health Technology Transfer Center
 - Research, Data, and Evaluation

Behavioral Health Care on Campus

- **An ongoing problem:** Pre-COVID-19 – Mental health care “crisis” on campus; Post-COVID-19 – ???
- **A big problem:** ~40% of students affected by behavioral health issues
- **An untreated problem:** 39% of students with mental health issues received treatment
- **An important problem:** 2.5x more likely to leave higher ed early
- **An inequitable problem:** Variation in prevalence of and access to care by race/ethnicity, income, institutional sector

Key Issues for Policymakers and Institutional Leaders

- Funding
- Workforce
- Care for students learning at a distance
- Stigma
- Diversity of care providers
- (Mostly) uncharted waters returning to campus post-COVID-19

Key Issues for Students

- Increased Isolation on Campus
- Difficulties – Living at Home
- Technology
- Higher rates of academic failure
- Unaddressed grief and loss

Key Issues for Staff

- Unrelenting levels of stress.
- Constantly adjusting to different models of delivery care.
- Budget Shortfalls.
- Personal Safety and Impact to Family and Friends.

"I've been working exclusively as a college mental health counselor for the past 20 years, and this is the worst year I have ever had."

Director of Student Counseling Center, West

Thank You

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