

## Addressing Social and Emotional Health in School Settings

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*APHA's 2020 VIRTUAL Annual Meeting and Expo (Oct. 24 - 28)*

### Abstract

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#### **“cura personalis”: Social and emotional health outcomes of first- and second-years living in a well-being focused residence hall**

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**Background/Significance:** Entering college is a significant turning point for students. Students trying to manage the new academic pressure and new living environment often experience poor social, emotional, and mental health outcomes. The purpose of this study is to assess whether a well-being focused residence hall with the theme of “Cura Personalis” and related programming (e.g., building connection, promoting self-care and stress management) is effective in influencing student social and emotional health.

**Methods:** A cross-sectional survey (Fall 2019; n= 271) measured social and emotional health outcomes among 1st- and 2nd-year residents in the well-being themed hall after one term of residence. These data were compared to campus-wide data from 1st- and 2nd-years (Fall 2018; n=537). Dependent variables included social and emotional health outcomes assessed on the ACHA-NCHA. Chi-square tests were used to assess differences.

**Results:** Residents in the well-being themed hall were less likely to have experienced a wide range of negative social and emotional health outcomes in the past two weeks compared to the general student population, such as hopelessness (13.6% vs. 27%, p<.01); loneliness (24.1% vs. 39.3%; p<.01); sadness (27.7% vs 39.1%, p<.01); depression (11.9% vs. 14.4%, p<.01); and overwhelming anxiety (25.1% vs. 29.8%, p<.01). Anger was not statistically significant (9.6% v. 12.1%, p=.28).

**Discussion:** As colleges and universities face the crisis of increased mental health challenges among students, developing residence hall programming that focuses on teaching students self-care and the complexities of well-being may be effective in supporting students on their social and emotional health and overall well-being.

Administer health education strategies, interventions and programs  
Implementation of health education strategies, interventions, and programs  
Planning of health education strategies, interventions, and programs  
Social and behavioral sciences

### Abstract

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#### **Sports- and physical activity-related concussion and risk of youth violence**

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**Background:** Sports- and physical activity-related concussion (SPAC) is an important cause of traumatic brain injury (TBI) among adolescents. Childhood TBI has been associated with cognitive impairment, emotional problems, and impaired behavior control, and these neuropsychological changes may place these youth at increased risk for engagement in violence-related behaviors.

**Methods:** Data from the 2017 national Youth Risk Behavior Survey (N=14,765), a nationally representative survey of US high school students, were analyzed in 2019 to examine associations between SPAC and violence-related behaviors occurring in the community and at school. Multivariable logistic regression models were used to calculate sex-stratified, adjusted (for race/ethnicity; grade; athlete status; impaired cognitive functioning; feeling sad/hopeless; and current substance use) prevalence ratios (aPRs). Prevalence ratios were considered to be statistically significant if  $p < 0.05$ .

**Results:** Male students (17.1%) were more likely than female students (13.0%) to experience a SPAC during the 12 months preceding the survey. Compared to students who did not have a concussion, those who experienced at least one SPAC were more likely to be in a physical fight (male students, aPR=1.45; female students, aPR=1.55), carry a weapon (male students, aPR=1.24; female students, aPR=1.79), and fight at school (male students, aPR=1.40; female students, aPR=1.77); in addition, male students were more likely to carry a gun (aPR=1.62) and carry a weapon at school (aPR=1.73).

**Conclusions:** Following SPAC, return-to-school programs may benefit from inclusion of assessment and counselling around issues of psychological and social functioning, conflict resolution, and coordination with community- and school-based violence prevention programs.

Epidemiology Planning of health education strategies, interventions, and programs Public health or related education Public health or related research

## Abstract

### Youth in action for health project: Association between mental health and exposure to violence

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**Background:** Adolescent exposure to violence is linked to physical and emotional stress, which has an effect on a variety of mental health outcomes. The *Youth in Action* project was developed to integrate public health inquiry in a high school's Biomedical Academy program, by using a Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR) approach with a health and social equity perspective.

**Research Question:** The aim of this study was to assess the association between exposure to violence at school and self-reported negative emotions of anxiety, stress, depression, and anger among participants of the *Youth in Action* project.

**Methods:** Baseline surveys were administered to 11th grade Biomedical Academy students at a low-income, ethnically diverse high school. Questions were adapted from the California Healthy Kids Survey including being a witness or victim of violent behaviors and negative emotions at school.

**Results:** Results from the 76 program participants who completed the survey showed 36% of students reported experiencing at least one act of violence at school in the past 12 months and between significant numbers of students report a negative emotion including anxiety: 42%, stress: 58%, depression: 39%, and anger: 36%. There was a significant association between experiencing a violent act at school and having negative emotions ( $p=0.033$ ).

**Conclusion:** This study indicated exposure to violence in a high school setting is associated with a variety of

mental health outcomes. It also highlights a need for supporting school anti-violence and mental health programs for the benefit of high school populations.

Administer health education strategies, interventions and programs Implementation of health education strategies, interventions and programs Public health or related education Public health or related research

## Abstract

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### **Middle school teens: The dangers of vaping and e-cigarettes**

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In CA due to the legalization of e-cigarettes with different flavors, the number of people vaping has increased, and in the US its attraction to teens is growing, with an increase of about one million. Because of the pleasant taste and the ability to hide its use, this problem has the potential to become even worse. Although vaping pose health hazardous to all age groups, the very young are the most vulnerable, and need aggressive education on how its affects can be long-lasting and life-threatening. To develop a program fitting to our population's needs a team of graduate students conducted a needs assessment among students, parents, staff, teachers, and administrators at a middle school located in the city San Bernardino, in a community with one of the lowest annual median household incomes in the U.S. Data was collected through windshield surveys, observations, literature reviews, theory-based key informant interviews and a focus group. The data were transcribed, analyzed, coded and themed using grounded theory methods. Results indicated that students consider vaping "cool, relaxing and thrilling" with many flavors choices. However, the students did not know that vaping could be detrimental to their health, and in fact dangerous. Students affirmed that they wanted to learn more about vaping, and the teachers too reported they needed to learn more strategies to educate their students. We then developed, implemented and evaluated a pilot program using process and impact evaluation for program improvement and sustainability. The results of the pilot will be further discussed

Administer health education strategies, interventions and programs Diversity and culture Implementation of health education strategies, interventions and programs Planning of health education strategies, interventions, and programs Program planning Public health or related education

