

# THE ACCESSIBILITY OF ONLINE MENTAL HEALTH CRISIS RESOURCES WITHIN SCHOOL DISTRICTS

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## **Purpose:**

With increasing technology, mental health resources have become available to students in ways that can potentially increase access. However, the extent to which crisis resources are provided through school district websites has not been explored. The purpose of this study was to investigate the availability of online mental health crisis resources on Texas school district websites, describe the ease of accessibility (i.e., number of clicks to locate information) and location of information within the website, and determine if the availability of online information differed depending on the district's geographic location.

## **Methods:**

Using data from a stratified random sample of school district websites ( $n = 123$ ), we performed descriptive statistics (e.g., percent) to determine how many school district websites had crisis resources. We performed chi-squared tests to determine whether the availability of resources differed by geographical categories as defined by the National Center for Education Statistics (i.e., city, town, suburb, rural), and an ANOVA to compare the mean clicks taken to reach crisis resources between the district locations. The categories of the resource webpage titles were explored descriptively (e.g., percents).

## **Findings:**

20.3% of the sample ( $n = 123$ ) had crisis resources on their website. There was a significant difference between the geographical groups on the Chi-square analysis ( $df = 3, p = 0.013$ ). In the ANOVA, there was not a significant difference by geography in the amount of clicks taken to reach the crisis resource from the home page of the school district website ( $F(3,22) = 0.030, p = 0.993$ ). Of the resources present, 60% ( $n = 15$ ) were primary resources for prevention while 40% ( $n = 10$ ) were for secondary prevention.

## **Conclusions:**

We found a significant difference between the geographical location groups in whether mental health crisis resources were present. Since 79.7% of the school district websites sampled did not have a resource present, we recommend that nurses advocate for resource availability. Further research is needed to determine the impact of online crisis resource accessibility on the mental health of students.