Do school-based depression prevention programs support youth?

Our overview of reviews found that school-based depression prevention programs may reduce the risk of depression and severity of depression symptoms.

On average, students in depression prevention programs had a 33% reduced risk of depression and a slight reduction in symptoms compared to students in control groups.

Will these programs work for my school?

Assuming your school and students are similar to those in the review, you are more likely than not to benefit from implementing a program. However, we cannot guarantee that it will work. Future research is needed to better understand which students and schools benefit the most from which programs.

Estimated probability that your students' average risk of depression and severity of symptoms will improve after program implementation.

83% for risk of depression

70% for severity of symptoms

hedcoinstitute.uoregon.edu/depression
Which Programs Did We Review?

We reviewed prevention programs focused specifically on reducing depression that were offered during the school day. We excluded studies focused on health promotion or treatment or on programs that were offered outside of school hours.

The 70 included primary studies provided data on 44,519 students

Studies took place in:

- Australia - 35.7% (25 studies)
- United States - 31.4% (19 studies)
- United Kingdom - 5.7% (4 studies)
- Netherlands - 4.3% (3 studies)
- Other locations - 23.2% (16 studies total)

Academic Levels

- 55.7% secondary/high school
- 20% primary/elementary school
- 21.4% intermediate/middle school

The majority of programs were facilitated by teachers, behavioral health personnel, or researchers.

Race/Ethnicity

69% of studies didn't report any race/ethnicity

Across studies that reported race/ethnicity - just 31% of studies - on average, 51% of students were white (SD = 37.8%).

Looking for more information on programs?

For more information on the specific programs and their characteristics - cost, student age, curriculum goals - visit our Program Profiles supplement: hedcoinstitute.uoregon.edu/depression

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