



Summary of Community Preventive Services Task Force Recommendation

The Community Preventive Services Task Force (CPSTF) recommends universal school-based cognitive behavioral therapy programs to prevent or reduce depression and anxiety symptoms among school-aged children and adolescents.

The CPSTF also recommends [Targeted School-Based Cognitive Behavioral Therapy Programs to Reduce Depression and Anxiety Symptoms](#) for students who are assessed to be at increased risk for these conditions.

Major Findings

The CPSTF recommendation is based on evidence from 38 studies identified in a systematic review published in 2017.¹

- Small decreases were reported for symptoms of depression (27 studies) and anxiety (24 studies).
- Intervention effectiveness was similar for interventions delivered by external mental health professionals and trained school staff.



What are universal school-based cognitive behavioral therapy programs?

These programs are delivered to all students, regardless of the presence or absence of depression or anxiety. These programs are delivered to all students, regardless of the presence or absence of depression or anxiety symptoms, to help them develop strategies to solve problems, regulate emotions, and establish helpful patterns of thought and behavior.

Trained school staff (e.g., school mental health professionals, trained teachers, nurses) or external mental health professionals (e.g., non-school psychologists, social workers) use therapeutic approaches outlined in an intervention protocol to engage with students in individual or group settings.

Facts about Anxiety and Depression

- Depression and anxiety are common among children and adolescents, and they can persist into adulthood, increasing risks for suicide, risk-taking behavior (e.g., substance abuse, sexual experimentation), teenage pregnancy, conduct disorder, delinquency, and poor academic outcomes.¹⁻³
- Among children aged 3-17 years, 3.2% have diagnosed depression and 7.1% have diagnosed anxiety.

Learn More

Summary of Evidence and CPSTF Finding

www.thecommunityguide.org/findings/mental-health-universal-school-based-cognitive-behavioral-therapy-programs-reduce-depression-anxiety-symptoms

National Institute of Mental Health

www.nimh.nih.gov/index.shtml

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

www.samhsa.gov

CDC, Children's Mental Health

www.cdc.gov/childrensmentalhealth/index.html

CDC, Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child Model

<http://www.cdc.gov/healthyschools/wsc/index.htm>

¹ Werner-Seidler A, Perry Y, Calear AI, Newby JM, Christensen H. School-based depression and anxiety prevention programs for young people: a systematic review and meta-analysis. *Clinical Psychology Review* 2017;51:30-47.

² Anxiety and Depression Association of America. Facts and Statistics. Silver Spring (MD): 2018. [Cited 10/1/18]. Available from URL: <https://adaa.org/about-adaa/press-room/facts-statistics>.

³ Weller EB, Weller RA. Depression in adolescents growing pains or true morbidity? *Journal of Affective Disorders* 2000;61:Suppl-13.

⁴ Ghandour RM, Sherman LJ, Vladutiu CJ, Ali MM, Lynch SE, Bitsko RH, Blumberg SJ. Prevalence and treatment of depression, anxiety, and conduct problems in U.S. children. *Journal of Pediatrics* 2019; 206:256–67.

Established in 1996 by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the Community Preventive Services Task Force (CPSTF) is an independent, nonfederal panel of public health and prevention experts whose members are appointed by the director of CDC. The CPSTF provides information for a wide range of decision makers on programs, services, and other interventions aimed at improving population health. Although CDC provides administrative, scientific, and technical support for the CPSTF, the recommendations developed are those of the CPSTF and do not undergo review or approval by CDC. Find more information at www.thecommunityguide.org.