

A PLACE TO GO

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MANY TEENAGERS ARE AFFECTED BY MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES



31.9 PERCENT MEET CRITERIA FOR AN ANXIETY DISORDER



19.1 PERCENT HAVE BEEN AFFECTED BY BEHAVIORAL DISORDERS



14.3 PERCENT HAVE EXPERIENCED MOOD DISORDERS

STUDENT-FAMILY ADVOCATES AMY KAHLE AND THOS TREFZ CAN HELP STUDENTS AT

THE WELCOME CENTER

As the two staff members who run the Welcome Center at City High, Amy Kahle and Thos Trefz's goal is to ensure that no student's life interferes with their academics. Trefz works to help find the resources that the student would need to be successful.

"If kids are having problems with their parents at home, we help them get hooked up with resources to help resolve that," Trefz said. "Lydia Frazier is here; she's a therapist from Four Oaks, a school-based therapy that we have a contract with. Also just finding an adult in the school, whether it's with a club, Success Center, or what have you."

The school also works with United Action for Youth to help solve issues between students and their families.

"They have a great family remediation program. Their skill set is working with families to solve problems. I think as a school, it's tricky to wade into that. It's great to have that outside resource that you know can be impartial enough to help the kid and the family."

Trefz says he's noticed an uptick in kids who are struggling with mental health.

"This is my fifth year at the job and it seems like every year there are more and more kids who are experiencing anxiety and depression, and that's having a big impact on them," Trefz said.

The Welcome Center helps work to provide resources for a student's mental health. Kahle helps work with students to determine how to best work through mental health struggles.

"If a student comes to me and they're having some mental health issues, then I will

chat with [them] about specifically what's going on and then what is the best path forward," Kahle said.

The path forward that Kahle described changes from student to student, so she has to ask several questions to determine how she can help the student find a solution to their issue.



"[We ask if] they have a therapist, we talk a little bit about medication, the pros and cons of medication, and have them reach out to their family doctor to discuss [medication]," Kahle said. "I also work with a lot of students who need to take a break during the day for mental health. They might come in here and just chill out for a little while, take a breath, and then go back to class when they're ready."

Kahle thinks that mental health is a real barrier for a lot of students,

"Mental health and attendance are closely

linked. If you are not healthy mentally, it's hard to focus on academics and oftentimes students just won't even come to school," she said. "I think we have to address [mental health] in school and part of the school's responsibility is addressing mental health needs."

Although the Welcome Center has

been working to integrate better mental health practices in the classroom.

"One thing I'm doing is going into classes and teaching mindfulness, so I'm going into two AP classes, and then there's a Success Center that is just focused on mindfulness and coping skills and mental health awareness," Kahle said.

Although in previous years Success Center was only open to students with an individualized education plan (IEP), City High

became the first school in the district to offer this program for students without an IEP. Trefz thinks that a success center can be an important resource for students.

"There's a variety of areas where a kid might be struggling, whether it's academically or something else. [Success Center] supports [students] that could use help with organizational or study skills," Trefz said.

Kahle also believes that the Success Center teaches students valuable skills.

"The Success Center is a group of students who have asked for just a few extra coping skills. It's called dialectical behavioral therapy; it's not a therapy, it's just more of skill-based learning," Kahle said. "They're relearning how to have better emotional regulation and distress tolerance, so that when big emotions do happen they have better-coping skills on how to deal with...emotions."

Despite the fact that the Success Center is now available for all students, Kahle wishes that more people would take a class similar to it.

"I wish that every student at City High would take a class like the Success Center that we're piloting. I wish that every freshman that walked through the door would have a have a class that taught coping skills," Kahle said.

For Trefz, helping students make it through high school is something that he's proud of.

"When you see a kid that's spent hours in your office see the light at the end of the tunnel at graduation, it's something that gets you a little teary eyed," he said.

several resources for students who

seek help, they have also



STUDENTS CAN ALSO
FIND A PLACE AT

THE STUDENT ADVISORY CENTER

Located in the oldest part of the building, behind the study hall room, the Student Advisory Center, or SAC, serves as a place in the building for students to take a breath and is a place where students can find help.

"[The purpose of the SAC is] to advocate for students when they are not having their greatest days," Doug Hammill, one of the two counselors working in the SAC, said. "That would be my job here, but to also advocate for teachers, so that there's a mutual respect between both the student and the teachers."

Students who are having a conflict with another student, with a teacher, or with someone from home are able to go to the SAC and work out their issues.

"I allow those students [to] come up here; we can talk about it, or [if] they need a quiet place to sit and think about stuff before they go back to class, or if they want us to make connections within the building, we can do that for them," Hammill said.

As technology becomes more and more prevalent in everyday life, cyberbullying becomes more of an issue. Mediation of conflicts both online and in real life is one of the biggest jobs of the SAC.

"We do mediation with students when there's issues here [in] the building, fights, cyberbullying, and anything like that," Hammill said.

The other counselor in the SAC, Ja'Korey Walker, appreciates that City High has a variety of people who are able to help students with mental health concerns.

"We have a lot of resources to help," Walker said. "The thing I like about it is [that] it doesn't have to be one person, because if the student doesn't feel comfortable with me, they can find several other people who are just as well."

Students who have a concern about their mental health or a friend's mental health are encouraged to talk to someone at City High about it. Walker and Hammill are always happy to help students that come to talk to them.

"My first goal is always just to make sure

they're safe," Walker said. "That's what I want to focus on first is making sure everyone's safe and just in a good space. If I can provide a student with just a safe place where they can come and just get away and have their time away, that's the biggest thing I want to do."

Hammill thinks that it is important that students have access to mental health resources so that they can gain some control and have connections to help them through any troubles.

"Sometimes if things aren't going so well and they're not feeling the greatest, to have that person that they know they can go to

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JA'KOREY WALKER
STUDENT ADVISORY CENTER COUNSELOR

give them a little bit control about their day and maybe about their situation [is a good thing]," Hammill said.

When a student comes to Hammill with some sort of problem, he asks the student what they would like the school to do for them. Hammill explains the options and is able to work with the student to help them find a solution.

"I can explain things and give them a choice," Hammill said. "[I try] to give them some choices and some things that they may not know about that we can offer them that a lot of times en[d] up helping them."

Walker thinks it's important that students know that their concerns will be taken seriously, no matter what issue they have.

"Everyone's voice should be heard and their concerns [should] be taken seriously,

because we never know the types of things people are going through, so to have someone here to support you is very important," Walker said.

Common mental health issues that are seen in the high school setting are students who have struggled with mental health in the past but never been diagnosed.

"Kids may or may not know what to look for and be able to get the help they need by the time they get here," Hammill said.

When helping a student who may have undiagnosed mental health issues, Hammill and Walker are able to work with the family to get them involved with somebody at the school to set up a doctor's appointment and start the process of getting professional help.

"Get a doctor's appointment set up—just a checkup would be better than nothing—and let your doctor know what's going on, I guess just making other people aware of how you're feeling and [if something] doesn't feel right [is helpful]," Hammill said.

Looking into the future, Hammill and Walker are excited about new programs and have hopes for new resources to be added.

"It would be nice to have another counselor in the building, because I feel like the drug and mental health piece a lot of times goes together," Hammill said. "Maybe even drug counseling [program] within our building would be a great thing to reestablish here."

City High used to have drug counseling, but it went away with budget cuts. The staff at City High are currently working on creating a mentoring program between students.

"We're going to empower our upperclassmen to mentor some of the underclassmen," Walker said. "I feel like that will be a good way to help people get connected and build relationships and make the school a better place."

Walker stresses how important it is that students reach out if they ever need help.

"No one's immune to needing help. I'm an adult and I need help, just as much as any student does," Walker said. "I feel like it's important for everyone to be able to have their voice heard."

mental health resources available to students

A guide to the resources available both in and outside of school.

Student-Family Advocates

Amy Kahle
Also contact for school-based therapist
Room 2105

Thos Trefz
Welcome Center

the health office

Angie Dean
School nurse
Health office

Jen Barbourousko
School nurse
Health office

the SAC

Doug Hammill
Student Advisory Center (SAC)

Ja'Korey Walker
Student Advisory Center (SAC)

other resources at City

Gerry Coleman
Dean of Students
Attendance office

Natalie Swan
Assistant Principal
Main office

Linda Hoel
Mary Peterson
Tom Carey
Ben Fraga
Guidance Counselors
Guidance office

Scott Jespersion
Assistant Principal
Main office

John Bacon
Principal
Main office

Lauren Darby
IJAG

Russ Johnson
Career and Internship
Coordinator

Fred Newell
IJAG

services outside of City

United Action for Youth
1700 1st Avenue #14,
Iowa City
(319) 338-7518

CommUnity (Crisis Center)
1121 South Gilbert
Court, Iowa City
(319) 351-2726

Abbe Center
1039 Arthur Street,
Iowa City
(319) 338-7884

Prelude Behavioral Services
430 Southgate Ave,
Iowa City
(319) 351-4357

Free Medical Clinic
2440 Towncrest Dr,
Iowa City
(319) 337-4459

Shelter House
429 Southgate Ave,
Iowa City
(319) 351-0326

Iowa College Access Network
2301 Oakdale Blvd,
Coralville
(319) 423-7702

Rape Victim Advocacy Program
108 River Street, Iowa
City
(319) 335-6000

University of Iowa LGBT Medical Clinic
920 East 2nd Avenue,
Coralville
3640 Middlebury
Road, Iowa City

105 East 9th Street,
Coralville
(319) 356-1616

Domestic Violence Intervention Program
1105 S Gilbert Court,
Iowa City
(800) 373-1043

phone and online resources

Mobile Crisis Outreach Program
1-855-800-1239

Suicide Hotline
Iowa Helpline: 1-855-800-1239
National Hotline: 1-800-273-8255

Crisis Chat
lowacrisischat.org

National Runaway Safeline
1-800-RUNAWAY