Mental Health of School Nurses in the United States during the COVID-19 Pandemic
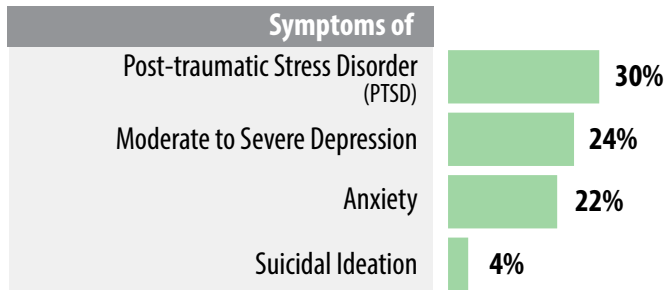
Highlights from a national survey | March 7-30, 2022

OVERVIEW

In March 2022, CDC collaborated with the National Association of School Nurses (NASN) and the National Association of State School Nurse Consultants (NASSNC) to distribute a 121-item survey to school nurses in the U.S. Overall, 7,971 school nurses responded from all 50 states, the District of Columbia, tribal nations, and U.S. territories.

Conditions Reported by School Nurses

Symptoms of	
Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)	30%
Moderate to Severe Depression	24%
Anxiety	22%
Suicidal Ideation	4%

Almost half (45%) reported symptoms of at least one adverse mental health condition in the two weeks prior to completing the survey.

Work-Related Stressors Reported by School Nurses Since COVID-19 Was Declared a Pandemic (March 2020)

Felt Bullied, Threatened, or Harassed	48%
Experienced Stigma or Discrimination	39%
Received Job-Related Threats	24%

School nurses were more likely to report symptoms of mental health conditions if they:

- Worked >40 hours weekly
- Reported inadequate staffing support or compensation
- Experienced lack of peer, supervisor, or school leadership support
- Felt unappreciated
- Worried about workplace exposure to COVID-19

- Reported stigma, discrimination, job-related threats, or harassment
- Took on additional COVID-19-related job duties, such as notifying parents about COVID-19 quarantine and isolation, and caring for students and staff suspected of having COVID-19

Overall, work-related stressors and COVID-19-related job duties were significantly associated with mental health symptoms among the school nurses who responded to the survey.

Improving school nurse mental health is essential to creating safe environments for young people in our nation's schools.

These survey findings highlight opportunities to improve supportive policies and practices to reduce workplace stressors and increase workplace supports for school nurses.

Supportive policies and practices could include providing adequate staffing, training, and support, particularly as they relate to COVID-19 or future public health emergencies.

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