



NEW JERSEY OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY OF

**HIGHER  
EDUCATION**

---

3 Years in Bloom: Mental Health Convening  
with Uwill and NJ Partners

April 30, 2026

# WELCOMING REMARKS



**Margo Chaly, Esq.**  
Acting Secretary of Higher Education



# **Ally (Allison) Whitty**

## Division of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS)

[Allison.Whitty@dhs.nj.gov](mailto:Allison.Whitty@dhs.nj.gov)

<https://nj.gov/humanservices/dmhas/>

NEW JERSEY HUMAN SERVICES



**DDHH**  
DIVISION OF THE DEAF  
AND HARD OF HEARING

**Elizabeth Hill, MSW**  
Director

Division of the Deaf  
and Hard of Hearing

[Elizabeth.hill@dhs.nj.gov](mailto:Elizabeth.hill@dhs.nj.gov)

<https://www.nj.gov/humanservices/ddhh/>



# Inclusive Mental Health Services for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing

New Jersey Division of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing



# DDHH

- NJ Department of Human Services
- Established in 1977
- Mission:
  - Remove barriers, promote equity through advocacy and support



# Programs and Services

- Equipment Distribution Program ([EDP](#))
- Hearing Aid Programs ([HAAAD](#) and [NJHAP](#))
- Language Instruction Program ([LIP](#))
- Case Management and Advocacy
- Communication Access Services
- Community Outreach and Trainings
- Information and Referral



# Inclusive Mental Health Services

- Approximately 48 million Americans are deaf or hard of hearing (d/hh)
- D/hh communities are extremely diverse and face inequities in diagnosis, treatment and service access
- It is important for mental health professionals to receive training on d/hh-specific needs





# Understanding Deafness and Hearing Loss

- Deaf: cultural identity, often sign language users
- Hard of hearing: varying degrees of hearing loss
- Deaf-blind: combined hearing and vision loss
- Diversity of experiences
- Distinction between medical and cultural/disability-affirming perspectives





# Understanding Deafness and Hearing Loss

- Secondary disabilities
- American Sign Language is not universal
- Language deprivation
- Direct communication is best practice



# Right to Mental Health for Individuals who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing Act

- [S1067 – "Right to Mental Health for Individuals who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing Act"](#)
- Directs DHS:
  - Conduct a landscape analysis
  - Establish an Advisory Committee





# Advisory Committee

- Inclusive Mental Health Services for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Advisory Committee – 11 members
  - Six (6) individuals who are d/hh
  - One (1) parent or legal guardian of an individual who is d/hh
  - One (1) mental health professional
  - One (1) sign language interpreter
  - One (1) representative of a higher education institution
  - One (1) educator who is licensed in New Jersey to teach individuals who are d/hh





# Advisory Committee

- Data Collection and analysis:
  - Current status of and future needs of mental health professional workforce development for consumers who are d/hh
  - Support staff and sign language interpreter workforce development
- Collect and review:
  - Resources, publications, best practices, guidance on culturally affirmative and linguistically appropriate mental health services for d/hh
  - Availability of education courses and/or training programs
- Make information available online



# Key Considerations

- D/hh individuals face unique mental health access barriers
- Cultural humility, awareness of hearing loss, and language access are foundational
- DDHH is a resource for support and training



# Contact DDHH

**Phone: (609) 588-2648**

**Videophone: (609) 503-4862**

**Fax: (609) 588-2528**

## **Office Hours**

**8:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.**

**Monday – Friday**

**E-mail: [DDHH.communications2@dhs.nj.gov](mailto:DDHH.communications2@dhs.nj.gov)**

**Website: <https://www.nj.gov/humanservices/ddhh/>**



Prevent Suicide New Jersey:  
**Campaign Toolkit**

Join the youth-led movement for suicide prevention in New Jersey. Share mental health resources and advocate for open conversations about suicide.



### Take Action Today

- Stand Together**  
Request Campaign Swag for your school or organization. Sign up for PSNJ to provide resources at an upcoming event.  
Need social content that is specific to your community? Complete our [Content Request Form](#).
- Reach Out**  
Join the conversation and get campaign updates from PSNJ!  
[Join our mailing list!](#)
- Speak Up**  
Share content on your social platforms using the materials in this toolkit.  
Tag us on IG [@preventsuicidenj](#) and use the hashtags:  
[#PreventSuicideNJ](#)  
[#PreventYouthSuicideNJ](#) [#PSNJ](#)

<https://www.preventsuicidenj.org/toolkit/>

# ReUp Education in New Jersey

Since 2023, ReUp and OSHE's partnership across 22 institutions in New Jersey has boosted re-enrollment and advanced degree attainment for residents with some college, but no degree (SCND).



**57%**

of learners who stop out cite mental health as a key factor according to the HOPE Center.



**65%**

of students are unaware of available campus support.



**31,000+**

New Jersey learners engage with ReUp, receiving access to Success Coaches and mental health resources.

# Supporting adult learners' mental health and success

ReUp shared resources and guiding questions with each partner institutions this Spring, exploring the availability and accessibility of mental health resources on each campus.

## Supporting Adult Learners' Mental Health and Success

Adult learners face unique challenges balancing college, work, and life, reporting higher rates of stress, anxiety, and depression than traditional students.

A recent [Hope Center survey](#) shows 57% of re-enrolled stopouts cited mental health as the reason they initially left. Despite this clear need, 65% of students are unaware of available support.

This aligns with ReUp's data, identifying mental health as a top reason students stop out a second time.

Among the resources ReUp offers to students, time management and mental health are referenced most often, underscoring the intrinsic link between time, stress management, and achieving academic success.

ReUp Sample Resources: [Coaching Exercise: If-Then Map](#)  
[Finding a Support System](#)  
[Where to Find Support for You, Food, Rent, or Utilities](#)

*"I'm taking mental health counseling on campus due to financial hardships. I'm hoping to improve my mental health and find a job so I can continue my education in peace."*

*- ReUp Learner*



COMMENTARY

# The Pandemic Fueled a Mental Health Crisis at Colleges. How Can We Fix It?

Depression has doubled on campuses in the last decade. There is more we can do to help.

By Brian Bridges | Contributor Oct. 23, 2024, at 2:53 p.m.



# Forbes

## New Jersey Funds New Mental Health Partnership For Its Colleges And Universities



## New Jersey's breakthrough teletherapy investment reaps sizable return





# DISCUSSION

# New Jersey Statewide Tele-Mental Health Supports Program Convening

April 30, 2026



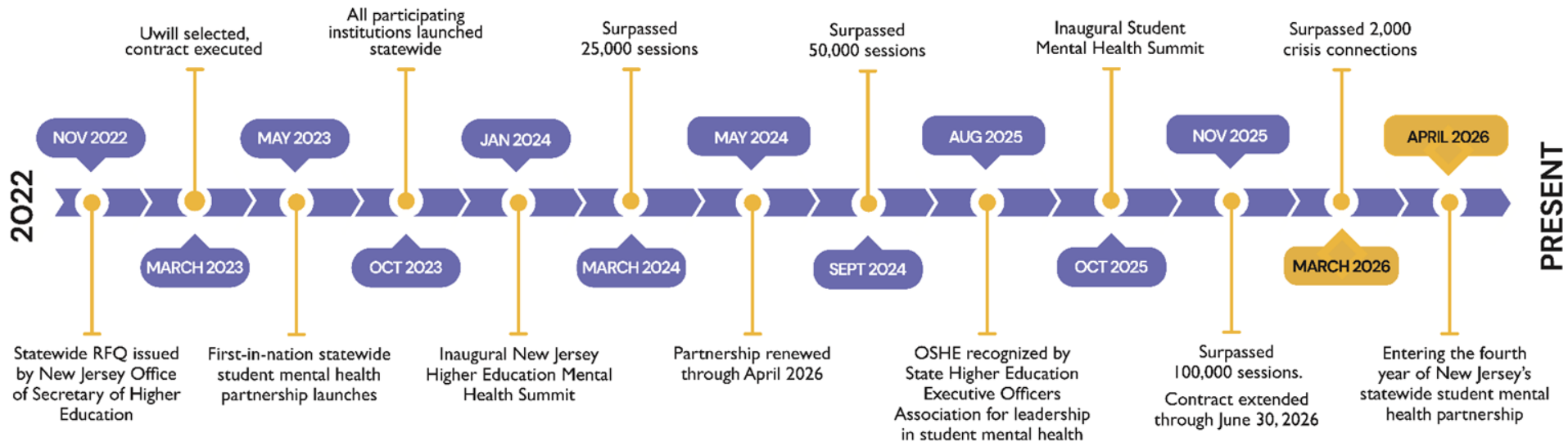
# Agenda

- 1 3 Year Data Overview
- 2 Practitioner Spotlight & Mental Health Trends
- 3 Spring 2026 Survey Results
- 4 Guided Meditation & Reflection
- 5 Thank You & Follow Up



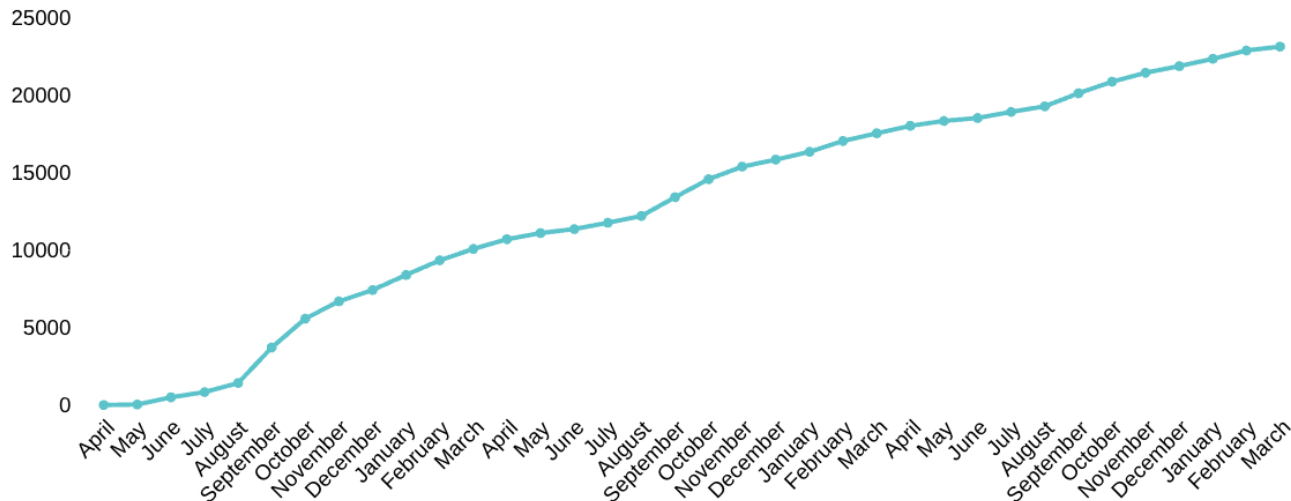
# 3 Years of Partnership: Utilization & Impact

# Timeline



# Registrations

April 1, 2023 - March 31, 2026

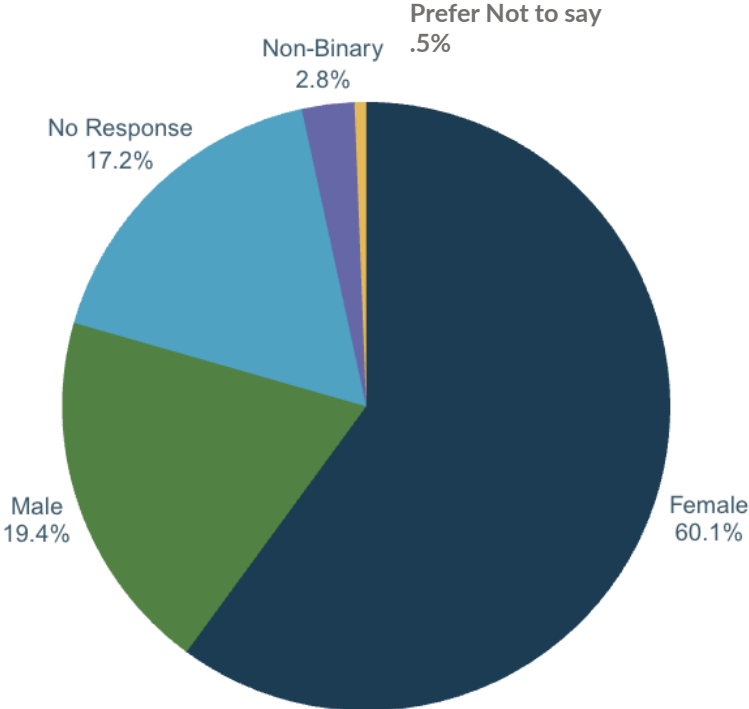


Total Registrations: 23,295\*

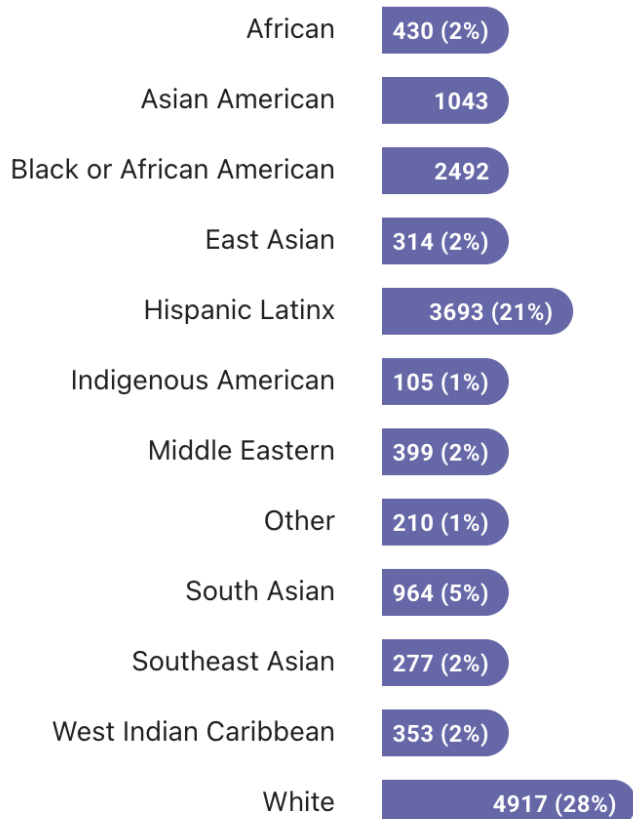
## By Sector

- Public: 65.2%
- County: 20.6%
- Independent: 14.2%

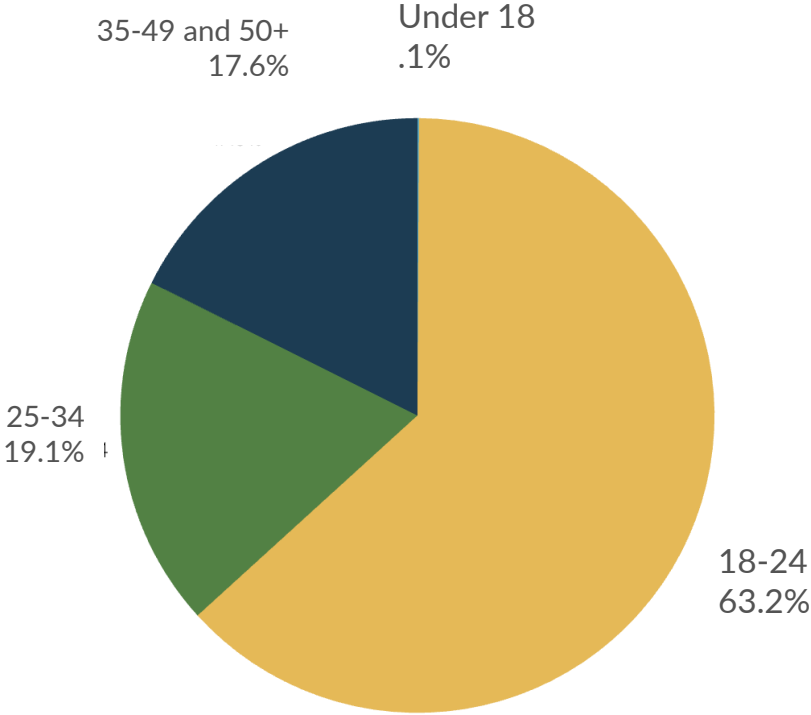
# Student Gender



# Student Ethnicity



# Student Ages



	Pub	CC	Ind
18-24	77.3%	63.1%	72.4%
25-34	17.9%	26.6%	22.9%
35-49 and 50+	4.7%	10.2%	4.6%
Under 18	.1%	.1%	.1%

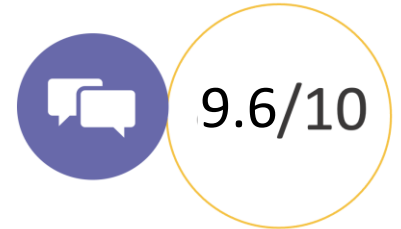
*This data reflects ages of students who have registered between April 1, 2023 - March 31, 2026*

# Uwill Student Comments

*"I have recommended Uwill to all of my friends in nursing school. I have been having weekly sessions with my therapist for over two years now and she has helped guide me to find myself as I transitioned from being unemployed living in a boarding house to working in a hospital helping people everyday and being a full time nursing school student. I am very grateful for UWill for connecting me to a therapist like [Provider Name], who specializes in the area of my needs."*

*"She was perfect and the right fit for me! I love how she speaks Spanish too which makes it easier to communicate!!"*

*"It can be quite nerve-racking to have your first therapy session. The simplicity of the appointment process was extremely helpful."*



# Mental Health Support is a Critical Enabler of Student Persistence

*Students need consistent, affordable support to stay engaged, succeed academically and remain enrolled*

*"I think it would take like kind of check-ins with somebody who could help me stay focused, so like I mentioned this with my therapist, but i have weekly therapy appointments which help keep me locked in... I think I need something like that for my academics"*

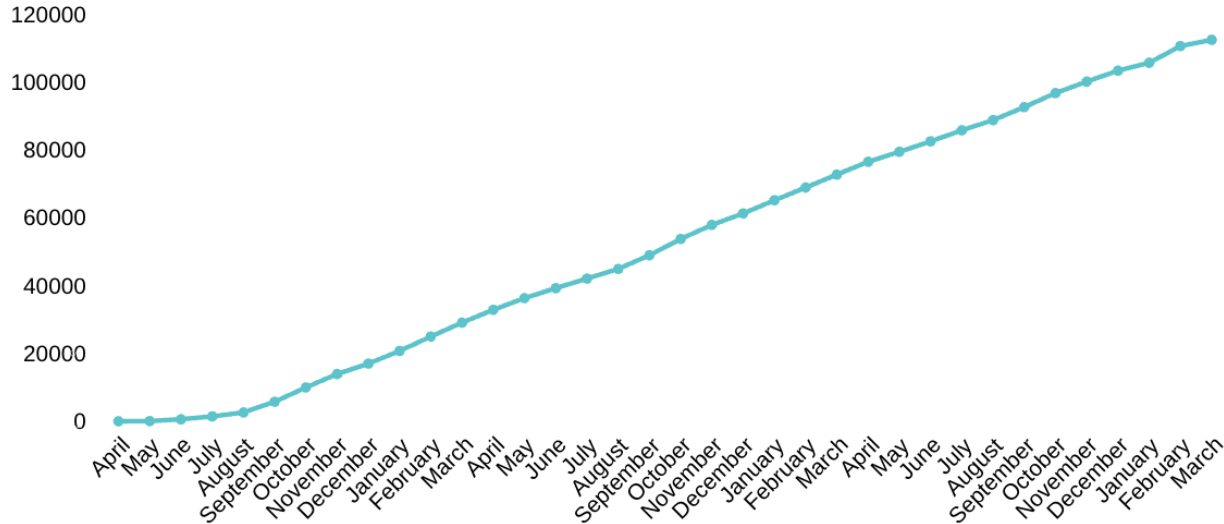
*"I want to go back to school but I'd like to know if there is any support for my mental health conditions to help me along the way?"*

*"...unfortunately, I... after I lost my job, I rely on my dad's insurance and apparently they don't cover mental health. I would love to see mental health resources, but, you know, one that doesn't cost me 200 each visit because I... generally don't have the money right now..."*

**RE  
UP**

# Sessions Scheduled

April 1, 2023 - March 31, 2026 - 5 Sessions Per Student



**Total Sessions Scheduled: 114,531**

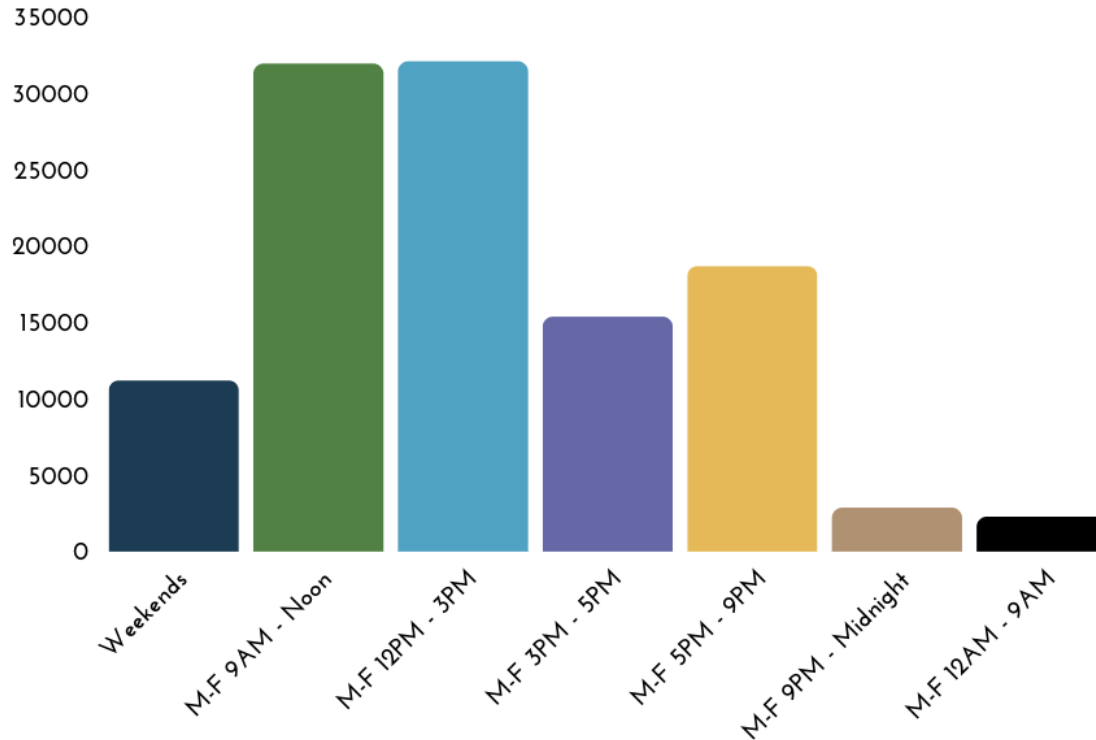
- Messages Sent: 10,635
- Chats Scheduled: 730

## By Sector

- Public: 71.7%
- County: 15.3%
- Independent: 13%

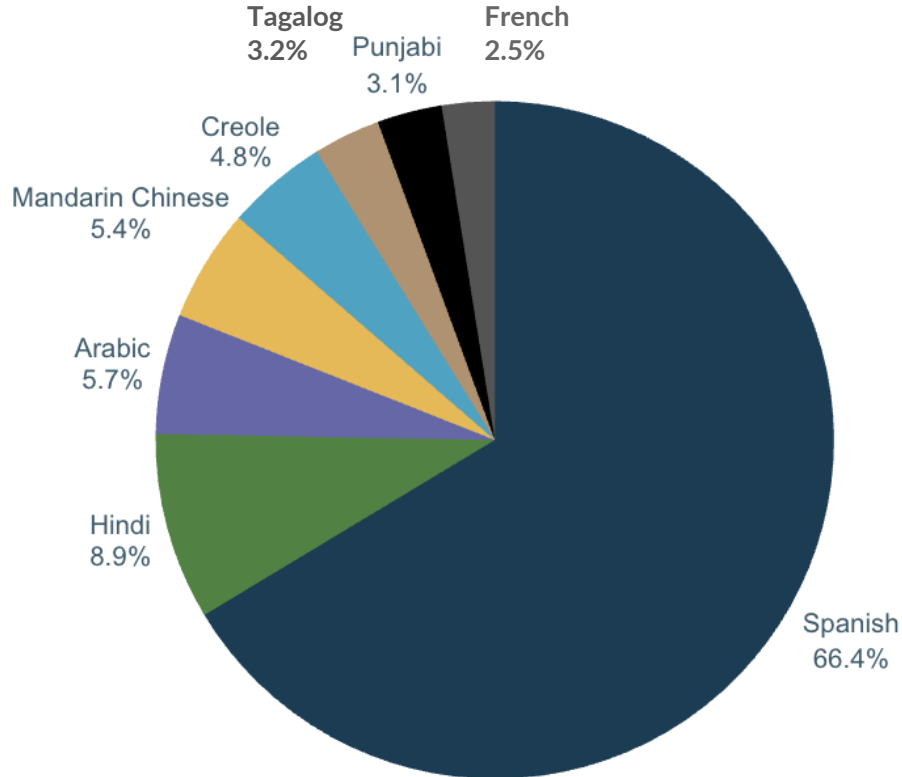
# Session Breakdown

*31% of sessions scheduled are off peak hour appointments*



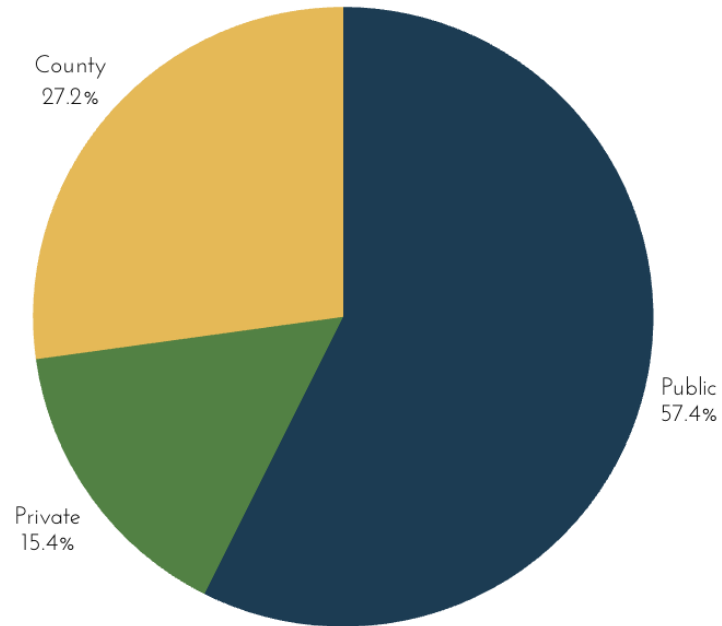
# Top Non-English Provider Searches

2025/2026 Academic Year

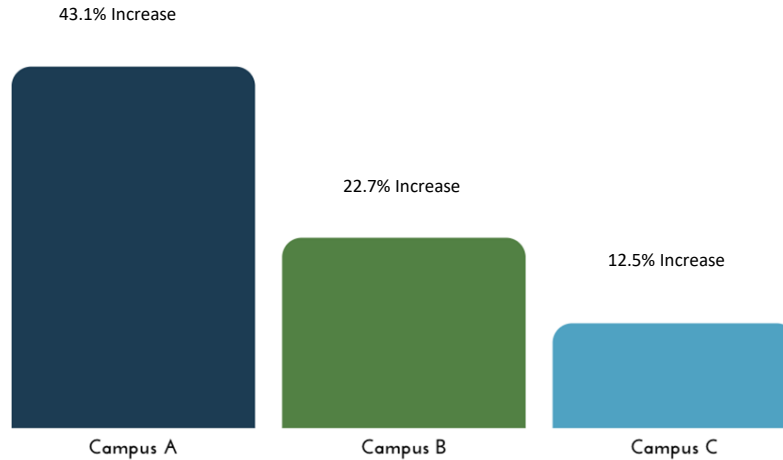


# Uhelp

Number of Uhelp Calls: 2,098, 6 active rescues

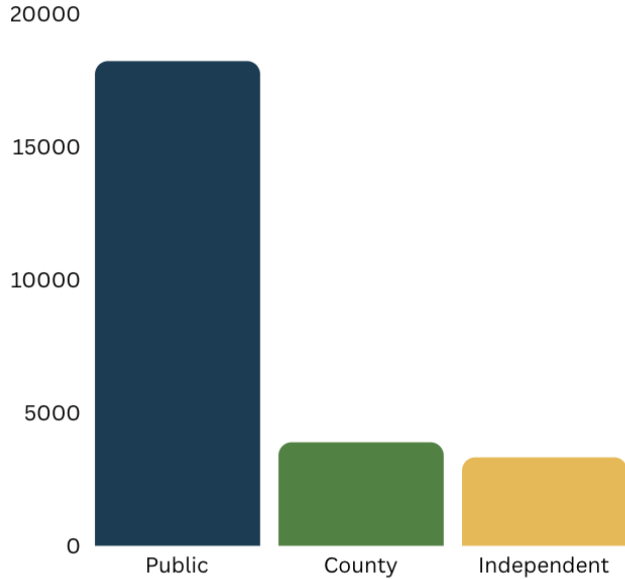


# Increase in Service Demand: *Counseling Sessions 2 Weeks Before & After an Event*



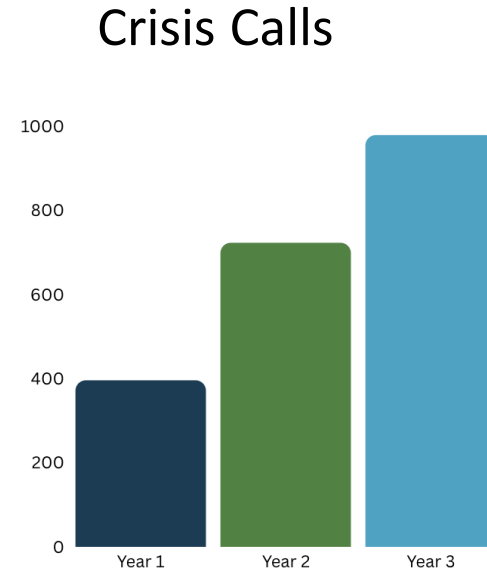
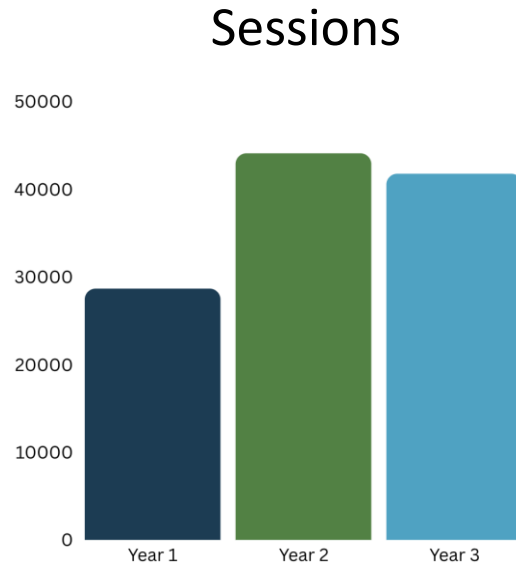
# Summer & Winter Intersessions

27,894 sessions scheduled, 7% were outside of NJ including 20+ countries



# Teletherapy Sessions & Crisis Calls

*Year 1, Year 2 & Year 3*



# Top Urise Wellness Views: 2025-2026 Academic Year

## *Start of Fall Semester:*

- Study Break: Autumn Mindfulness
- Repairing Fractured Relationships
- What to Expect During A Counseling Session

## *Fall Semester Final*

### *Exams:*

- Bounce Back From Failure
- What To Do With Your Bad Mood
- How To Stay Positive When Things Aren't Going Your Way

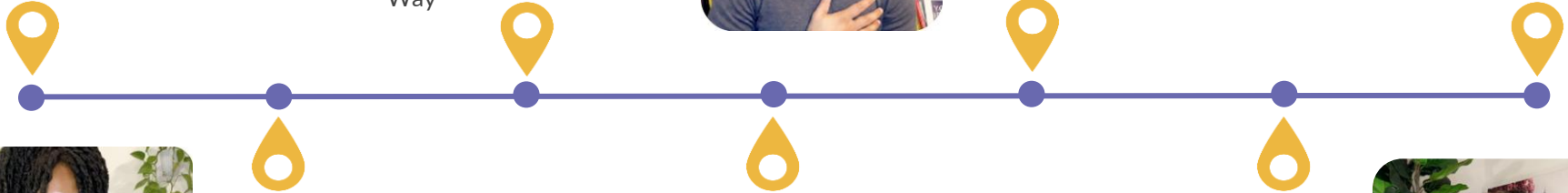


## *Start of Spring Semester:*

- One New Connection
- The Winter Blues
- When Cramming Is Your Only Option

## *Spring Break:*

- You Are Okay
- Applications, Resumes, & Cover Letters
- You Failed That Exam, Now What?



## *Fall Semester Midterms:*

- Resilience, Reflections & Rhymes: A Conversation with Mental Health Advocate DMC
- How To Get Better Sleep
- Repairing Fractured Relationships

## *Winter Intersession:*

- The Winter Blues
- Bounce Back From Failure
- Meditation: A Tree In A Storm

## *Spring Semester Midterms:*

- You Are Okay
- What To Do When You Make A Big Mistake
- 3-Minute Meditation



Follow directions and use the requested application form

# Urise Career Series

Designed to help students build confidence and succeed beyond the classroom, this new programming offers practical, real-world guidance on everything from crafting standout resumes and navigating interviews to managing rejection, collaborating effectively, and thriving in the workplace.

This series can be found under Wellness Programs in the career category and includes:

- [Applications, Resumes & Cover Letters](#)
- [The Mindset That Wins Interviews](#)
- [The Truth About Job Rejection](#)
- [5 Tips For Better Collaboration At Work](#)
- [The Workplace Skill That Matters Most](#)
- [Work Presentations Without Worry Or Fear](#)
- [Turn Office Conflict Into Opportunity](#)
- [Changes At Work? You Got This](#)



# Urise Student Leaders Series

Designed to support Resident Advisors and student leaders in their unique roles. This comprehensive seven-part series offers guidance on navigating responsibilities, supporting student wellbeing, and caring for one's own mental health in a demanding campus environment.

- [Part 1](#): Your #1 Tool for Being a Great Student Leader
- [Part 2](#): What Is Yours To Do
- [Part 3](#): Creating a Resource List
- [Part 4](#): Compassion Fatigue
- [Part 5](#): Physical & Emotional Distress of a Student In Your Care
- [Part 6](#): Supporting a Student with Suicidal Ideation
- [Part 7](#): Self-Care & Self-Confidence



Questions?

# Practitioner Spotlight: Where Data Meets Practice

Jackie Tenuto, Associate Dean of Student Success & Retention, Camden County College

Chimaobi Odumuko, MBS, RPh, PharmD, Acting Executive Director Kean Wellness Center

Danielle Bachant, LCSW, MT-BC, Director of Counseling, NJCU



# Clinical Insights:

## Student Mental Health Trends & Priorities

*Amaura Kemmerer, LICSW, VP Clinical Success*

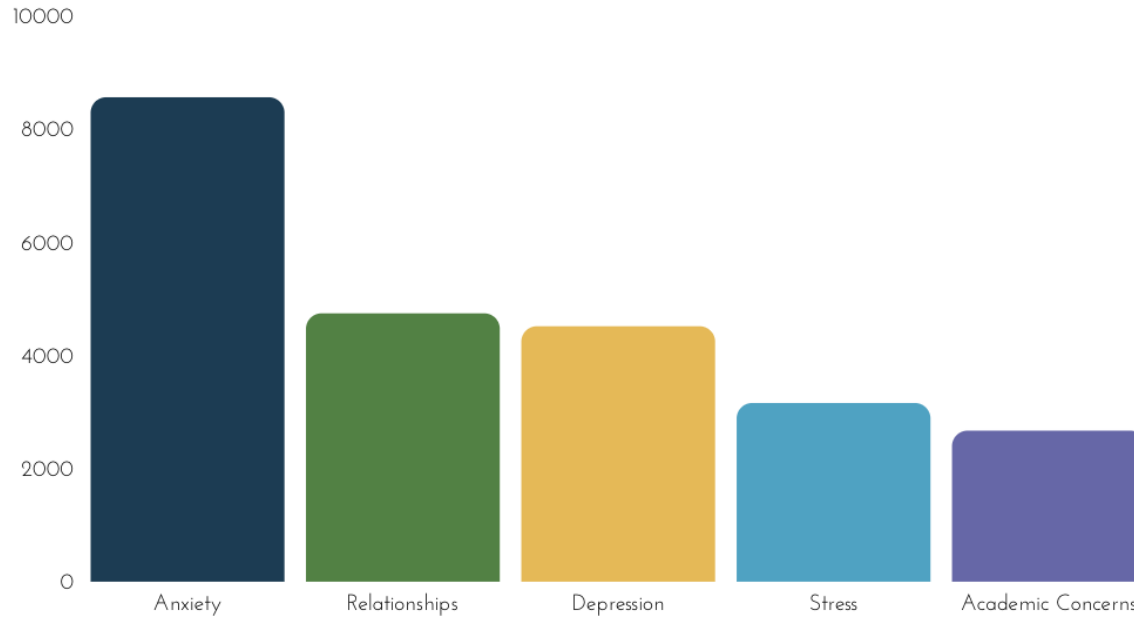


What were the top five student focus areas during the 2025–2026 academic year?

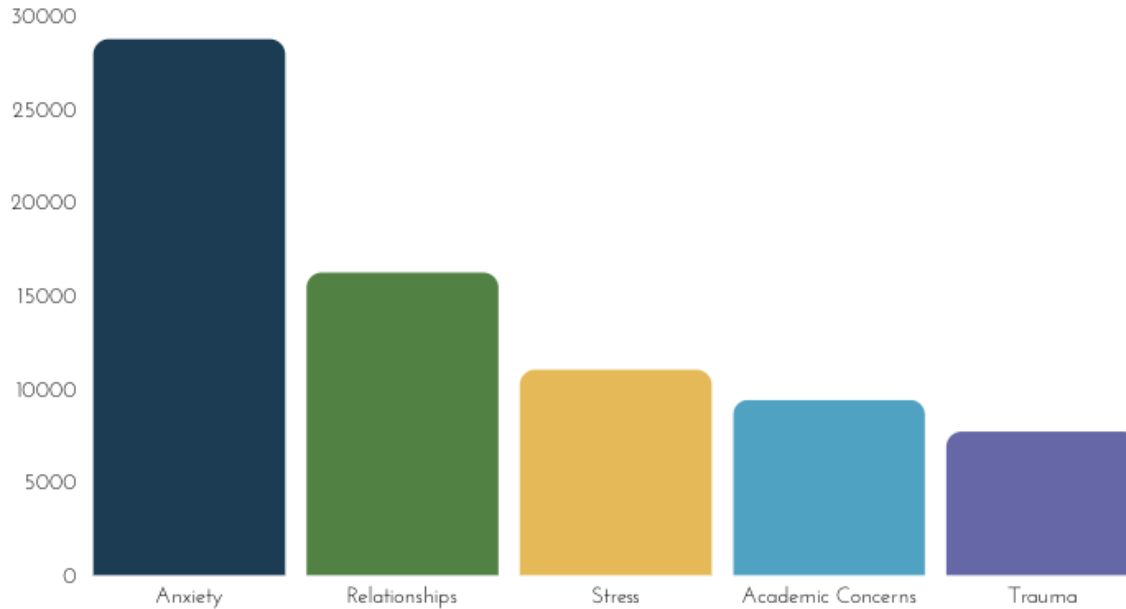
- A. Anxiety, Relationships, Depression, Stress, Academic Concerns
- B. Self Esteem, Loneliness, Financial Stress, Diet/Eating Concerns, Grief
- C. Mood Swings, Obsessions/Compulsions, Substance Use, Sleep Challenges, Panic/Overwhelm

# Focus Areas: New Jersey

## 2025 - 2026 Academic Year



# Focus Areas: Total Uwill Student Population 2025 - 2026 Academic Year



# Trends: Mental Health Among Students

## Higher Education

- Recent reductions in rates of depressive symptoms, anxiety symptoms, suicidal thoughts, and loneliness
- Levels of *flourishing* (psychological well-being) have declined
- 63% of students reported: “I needed help for emotional or mental health problems”
- Mental health service utilization remains high
- Top barriers to care: lack of time (23%) and financial reasons (22%)

## High School

- Nearly all indicators of poor mental health worsened from 2013 to 2023
- Increases in persistent sadness, suicidal ideation, suicide planning, and attempts
- Top concerns: self-esteem, anxiety, loneliness, social isolation, academics, body image, and sleep
- Help-seeking behaviors have increased

# Trends: Utilization and Access

## Utilization Varies Significantly by Institution Type

- Nationally, students at private / four-year institutions are 4x more likely to use counseling
- Many NJ institutions, particularly county colleges, outperforming national averages
- Higher utilization reflects strong outreach, visibility, and normalized help-seeking

## Student Needs Are Not 'One Size Fits All'

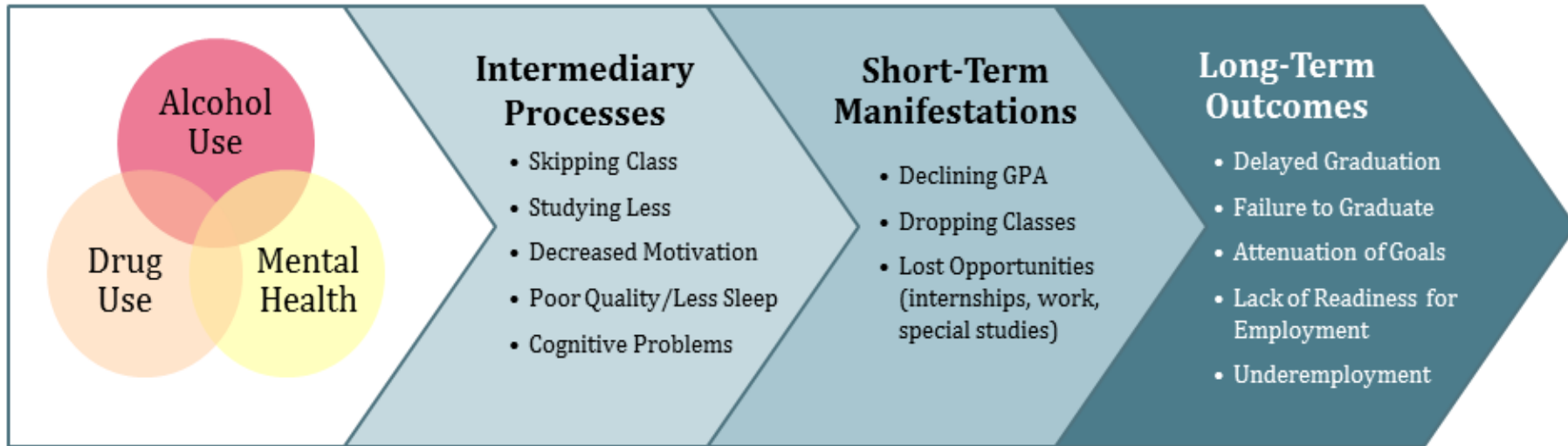
- Students need different support at different times
  - 24/7 crisis care
  - Immediate single session support
  - Ongoing therapy

# Trends: Faculty and Staff Role in Mental Health

- Faculty and staff mental health is an increasing concern
- Nearly half reported having one-on-one conversations with students about mental health
- 81% agree that student mental health problems are significantly worse now than when they began their careers
- Faculty and staff are often trusted first points of contact for students in distress
- Many want to help but report needing training on how to approach these conversations
- Positive faculty/staff-student conversations increase the likelihood that students will follow up with needed mental health services

# Mental Health, Academic Success and Retention

Effects of mental health problems, substance use can be understood as a “cascade” of interrelated problems





# Trends: Towards a Culture of Care

- Student mental health has improved in some areas, but needs remain high
- Students need timely access to licensed support for clinical and expected developmental challenges
- Students expect flexible, convenient pathways to care
- Faculty and staff are critical partners; strong systems reduce campus strain
- Unmet mental health needs affect retention, academic success, and workforce readiness
- New Jersey is leading through visible, complementary care models

# Uwill Counselor Community: Carolina Espin, LPC



# Student Voices: Spring 2026 Survey Results

*Presented by*  
Kelly Downing  
Vice President, Marketing



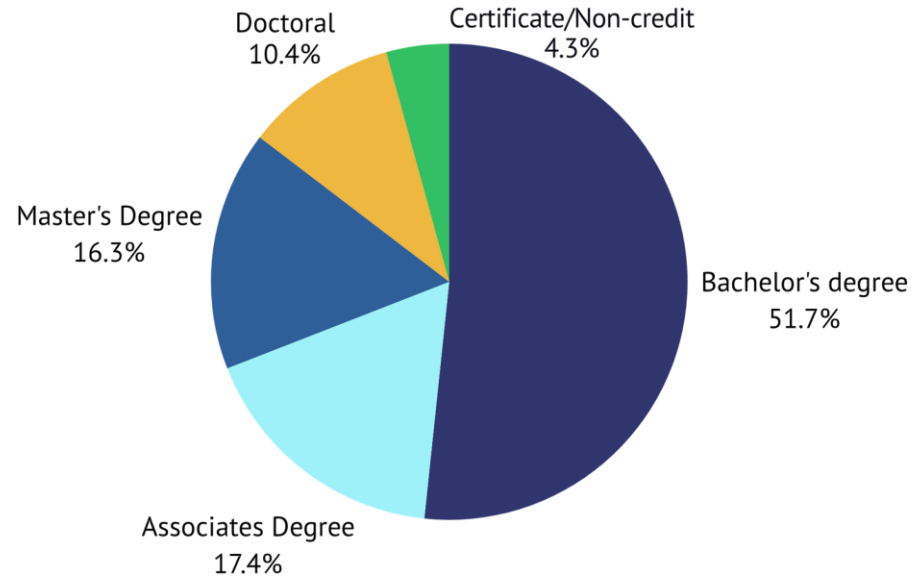
# Student Demographics

52% Bachelor degree, 27% graduate/doctoral

31% of students live on campus

8% of students are studying fully online

6% of students are parents or caregivers



## Key learning:

Ensure we keep the student in mind with our messaging and creative. Ensure the image reflects the students, and the messaging hits home and resonates with their life and struggles.

# Utilization

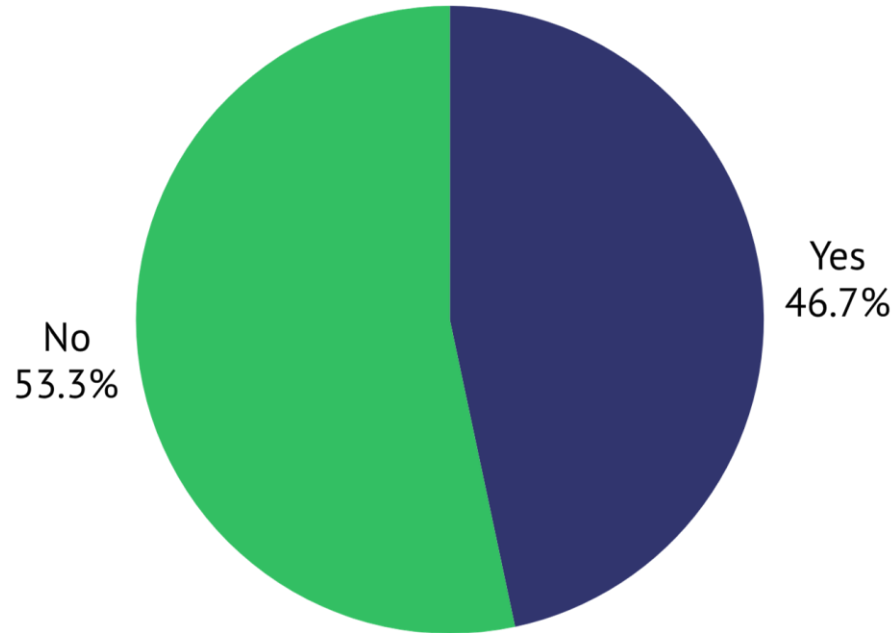
- 80% of students surveyed had teletherapy with Uwill
  - 60% 1-5 sessions
  - 23% 11+ sessions
  - 17% 6-10 sessions
- Students who did not schedule a session:
  - 42% said they're trying to decide if therapy is right for them
  - 10% use the wellness content
  - 3% were required to register
  - 44% other: **"I've struggled with finding time and prioritizing myself."**
- 8% of students surveyed received crisis support from Uwill

## Key learning:

Time was cited as a reason students had not scheduled a session. We can continue to emphasize ease of booking and availability of sessions at any time of day or weekends to ensure students find an opportunity to get the support they need.

## Utilization:

53% of students have not accessed support from the campus counseling center

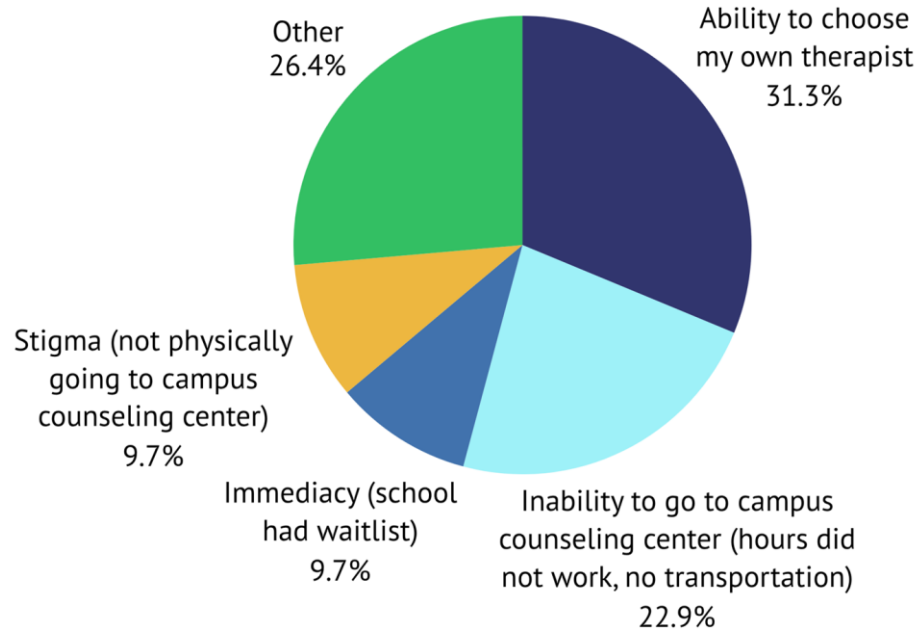


### Key learning:

Ensure promotion and awareness of Uwill comes from outside the counseling center, as well as within it.  
Find other messengers and advocates around the institution to spread the word.

# Utilization:

## Why Students are Choosing Uwill



### Key learning:

Choice, ability to have session from anywhere, and immediacy are key areas to highlight in messaging to ensure students who are not able to go to campus understand the support they have available to them.

## Utilization:

Half of students surveyed say a specific incident prompted them to first use Uwill

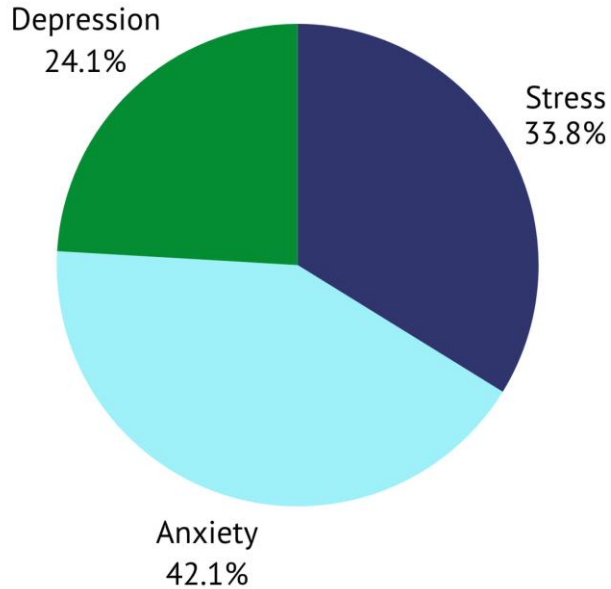


### Key learning:

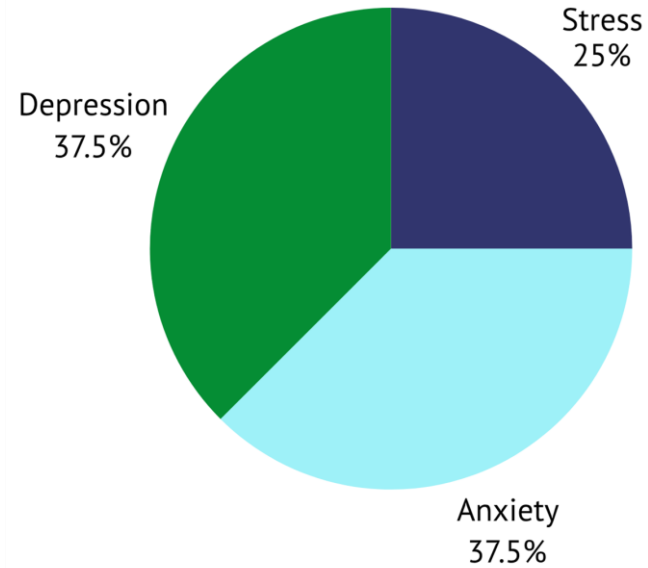
Highlighting immediacy and 24/7/365 in messaging can ensure whenever a student faces a mental health issue, they know support is available.

# Focus Areas

*Teletherapy Users: Primary*



*Crisis*



# Focus Areas: Teletherapy Users

## Primary & Secondary Reasons

### Primary reason: Anxiety

#### Secondary reasons:

1. Panic or overwhelmed
2. Self esteem
3. Relationships
4. Academic concerns
5. Sadness
6. Lack of motivation
7. Attention & concentration
8. Loneliness
9. Social challenges
10. Mood swings

### Primary reason: Stress

#### Secondary reasons:

1. Academic concerns
2. Relationships
3. Lack of motivation
4. Self esteem
5. Attention & concentration
6. Panic or overwhelmed
7. Sadness
8. Loneliness
9. Financial stress
10. Social challenges

### Primary reason: Depression

#### Secondary reasons:

1. Lack of motivation
2. Sadness
3. Relationships
4. Self esteem
5. Panic or overwhelmed
6. Loneliness
7. Trauma
8. Academic concerns
9. Social challenges
10. Mood swings

Other secondary focus areas noted:

- Navigating/understanding child's mental health issues
- Work concerns
- Parenting challenges

# Uwill services help students stay enrolled in college

**48%** of students who used Uwill teletherapy agree Uwill services have helped them stay enrolled at their college or university

**70%** of students who used Uwill crisis support agree Uwill services have helped them stay enrolled at their college or university

# Uwill has made a positive impact for students

**84%** of students who used Uwill teletherapy say Uwill has made a positive impact on their **mental health**

**83%** of students who used Uwill teletherapy say Uwill has made a positive impact on their **anxiety**

**78%** of students who used Uwill teletherapy say Uwill has helped them better navigate **relationships**

**83%** of students who used Uwill teletherapy say Uwill has helped them with **stress**

## Basic Needs Challenges:

Aside from mental health, 38% of students have faced other challenges in the last 60 days

36% Financial

19% Transportation

16% Food

13% Technology

10% Housing

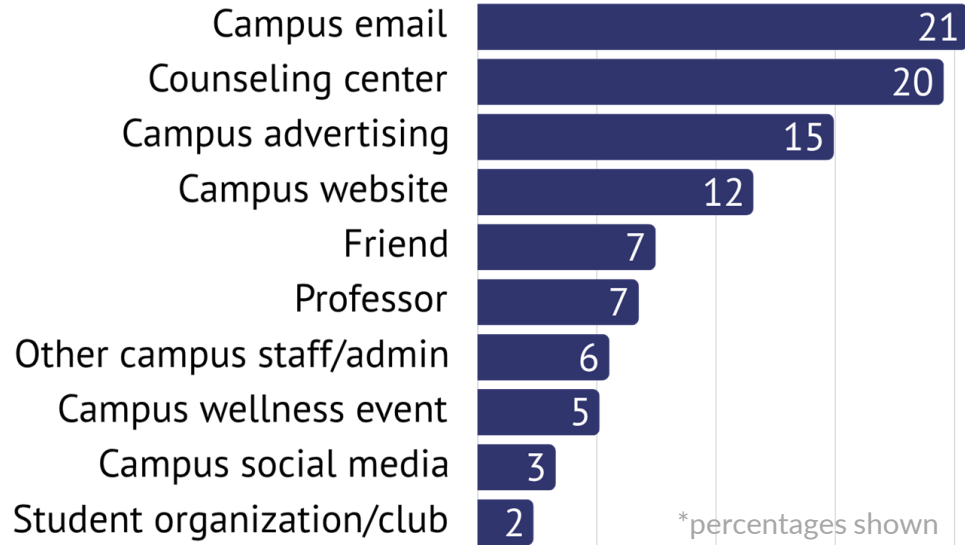
3% Childcare

3% Other

62% noted N/A or prefer not to

# Marketing & Communication:

#1 way students hear about Uwill is via campus email



## Key learning:

Keep up the good work promoting Uwill and your campus resources to students. Communicate often, from different sources around the institution, to promote, raise awareness, and ensure students know where to turn when they need help.

# Space for Stillness & Reflection

Thank you!



# Appendix



# Reflection #1

1. Take three long, slow, deep breaths
1. Take :60 seconds to reflect on what you have heard or experienced in today's event
1. Write one sentence to remember your main takeaway or moment of insight

# Reflection #2:

## Moving From Burnout to Baseline Balance to Beneficence



Burnout
<input type="checkbox"/> Exhaustion
<input type="checkbox"/> Cynicism
<input type="checkbox"/> Insomnia/Hypersomnia
<input type="checkbox"/> Isolation/Loneliness
<input type="checkbox"/> Low sense of accomplishment
<input type="checkbox"/> Lack of motivation
<input type="checkbox"/> Feeling overextended

Baseline Balance
<input type="checkbox"/> Stable
<input type="checkbox"/> Steady
<input type="checkbox"/> Consistent
<input type="checkbox"/> Reliable
<input type="checkbox"/> Emotions proportionate
<input type="checkbox"/> Focused & Relaxed
<input type="checkbox"/> Able to handle setbacks
<input type="checkbox"/> Resilient

Beneficence
<input type="checkbox"/> Desire to help others
<input type="checkbox"/> Supportive
<input type="checkbox"/> Attentive
<input type="checkbox"/> Respectful
<input type="checkbox"/> Non-Judgmental
<input type="checkbox"/> Compassionate
<input type="checkbox"/> Caring
<input type="checkbox"/> Patient & Humane

# Self-Care for Baseline Restoration

- ▶ Free
- ▶ Undetectable
- ▶ Effective

## 3-Part Breath To Regain Baseline



$\frac{1}{3}$  inhale  
**Low Belly**  
Inflate like balloon



$\frac{1}{3}$  inhale  
**Side & Back Ribs**  
Inflate 360°



$\frac{1}{3}$  inhale  
**Collarbones**  
Inflate upper lungs

# Practitioner Perspective

"From the Hudson County Community College - Journal Square campus.

Working with the I'm Alive team has been wonderful. They are professional, responsive, and truly collaborative.

We worked with their team this year during our Accessibility and Wellness Fair and asked whether they could add a table focused on disability-related questions. This was an effective way to integrate disability-informed education into the event. As we know, students with disabilities or mental health challenges often do not seek support due to both internal and external stigma, and normalizing these conversations is incredibly important."

