

To Pima County Educational Institutions, School Districts, and Local Officials,

We, as the Pima County Health Department Youth Health Action Team, propose that Pima County middle schools and high schools create mental health teams spearheaded by the student body. These teams will be a go between the adult administration and the students to inform the needs of the school to the administration, as well as help educate the student body on identifying and helping those with mental health illnesses.

Schools are encouraged to facilitate and foster the following:

1. Form a student-run mental health advisory club, committee, or integrate an elected advisory position into a school board that regularly meets with school administration, and/or parent boards. Such organized groups will be representative of the student body needs and facilitates communication between students, parents, and administration.
2. Encourage student engagement with guidance counselors and existing mental health resources on campus. Doing so ensures students are aware and properly educated on how to seek help and are comfortable reaching out to receive it.
3. Students should be granted permission to fundraise through their institution, ensuring that their outlined annual mission goals receive necessary funding to support the student body mental health teams.

We feel it is critical at this time to act to aid our students in identifying mental health illnesses, highlighting suicide as the second leading cause of youth death in Pima County, as well as to help students cope with mental illnesses.

Furthermore, we ask the government for funding to be allocated to school teams so they can provide professional resources to our school and begin to Heal Our Youth! We feel it is key at this time to act as the number of youth suffering from mental health illnesses has increased since COVID-19 and are becoming more susceptible to drug misuse and suicidal ideation. Youth mental health is central to the overall performance and well-being of students in school environments. In order to best ensure that students are able to communicate about their needs, it is significant that schools provide a proper platform for student voice. We feel it is vital to act now, on our asks, to assist today's students in navigating their mental health to become prepared for the rigors of leadership, life, and success.

Sincerely,  
Youth Health Action Team Members and Pima County Youth

