

# CVUSD Community Views on Mental Health Checks

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## Abstract

The purpose of this study is to examine the current state of mental health issues within the Conejo Valley Unified School District (CVUSD) and to evaluate the community's views on implementing school-based mental health checks. To discover this, surveys were given to students and parents, and interviews were also conducted among counselors and assistant principals of instruction (APIs) from the CVUSD high schools. Results showed emotional health issues are prevalent among CVUSD students, and overall, community members would support a mental health program. Likewise, counselors and APIs supported the idea, but expressed possible limitations surrounding the checks such as finance and the validity of students' responses in their questionnaires.

## Introduction

Considering the amount of pressure experienced by high school students, complications such as anxiety and stress remain quite prevalent in society. Despite this, teens enduring these problems have few outlets to reach out to, thus resulting in the early signs of mental health disorders going unnoticed (Allen & McGuire, 2011). Mental health checks would ask teens questions regarding their emotional state and their responses would be analyzed by counselors or school psychologists to seek out struggling students (Chorpita, Ebesutani, & Higa-McMillan, 2011). This study does not seek to push towards the implementation of school-based mental wellness checks, but it strives to study the feasibility of doing so and the opinions of the CVUSD community surrounding this proposition.

## Participants/Methods

The subjects consist of a mix of college preparatory (CP) and honors/advanced placement (AP) students, parents, assistant principals of instruction (APIs), and counselors. The inclusion criteria consisted of only members from the comprehensive high schools of the CVUSD, which includes Newbury Park, Thousand Oaks, and Westlake. The student surveying process was completed by visiting the classes, administering parent consent forms, and returning later to provide those who returned consent forms with the link to the survey. In addition, CVUSD parents were surveyed through a link provided on the parent consent form which added 100 more results. Interviews sought information from APIs and counselors from each comprehensive CVUSD high school, totaling five interviews.

## Survey Results

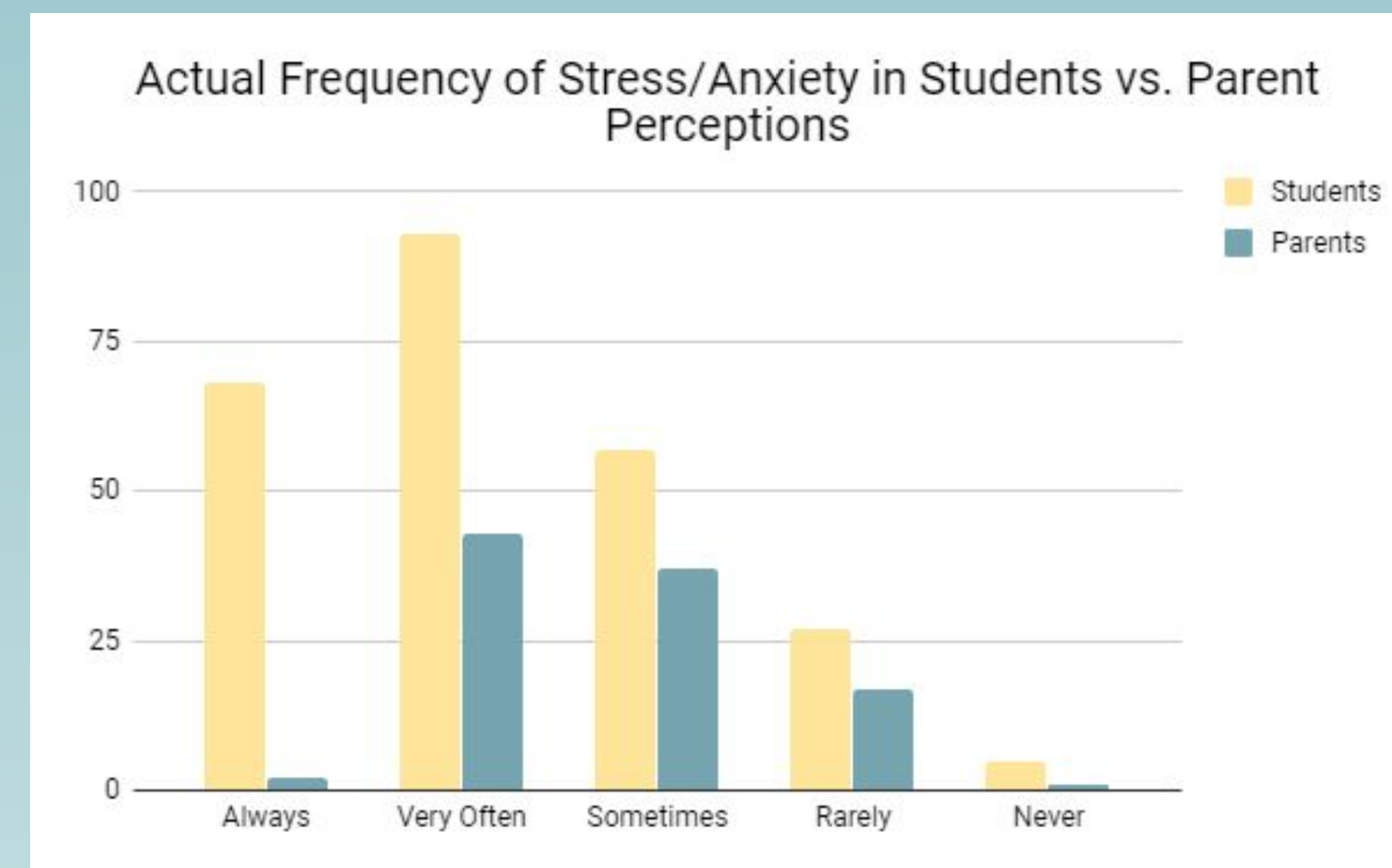


Figure 1: How often students experience stress/anxiety vs. how often parents think they do.

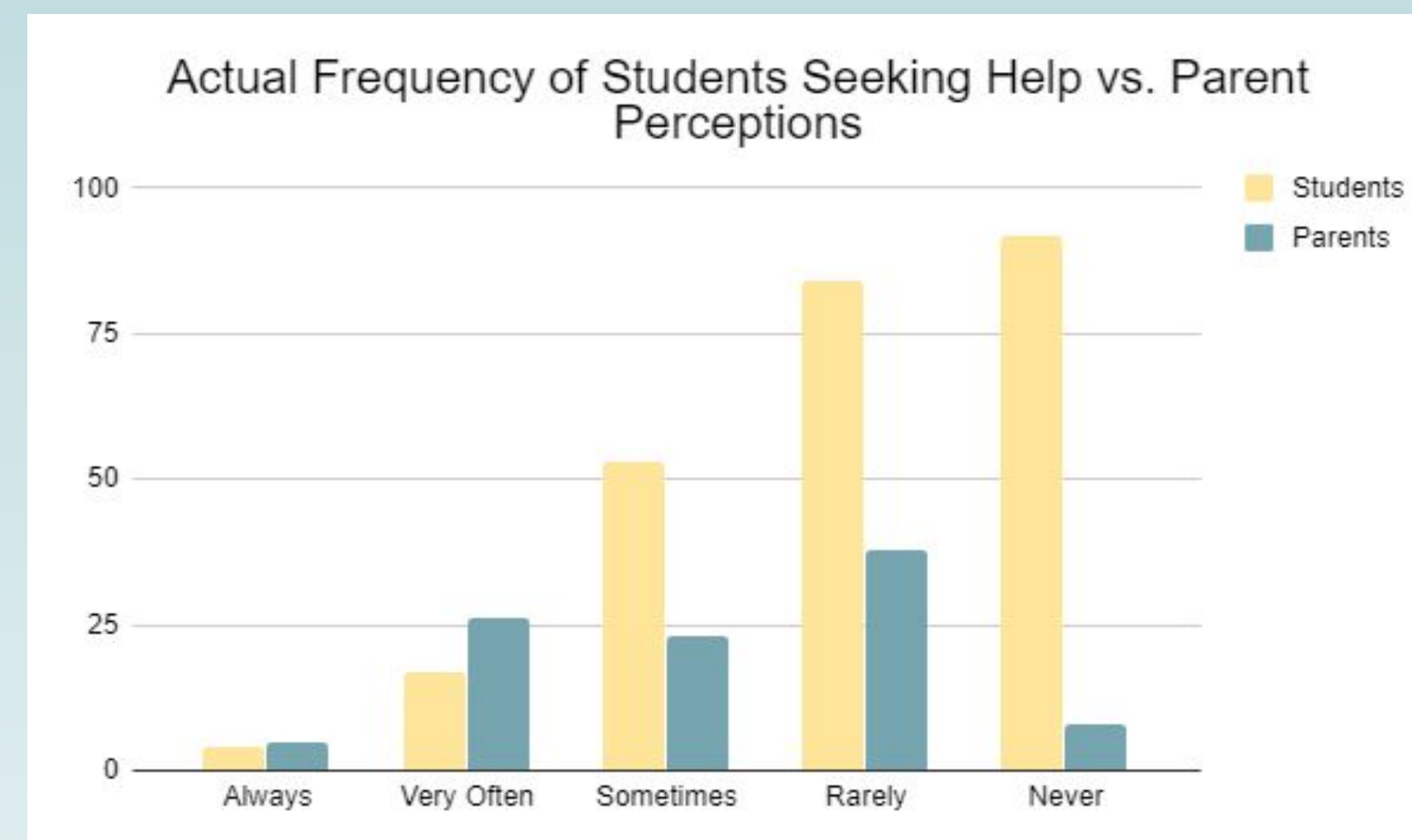


Figure 2: How often students seek help vs. how often parents think they do.

## Interview Results

All of the APIs and counselors revealed they do find mental health issues to be somewhat or very prominent in their high school which supports the results from the surveys. Additionally, they all responded saying a majority of these students are discovered through monitoring grades and attendance or by parents or teachers bringing attention to a particular student. Once these students are discovered, the high schools reported having counselors, mental health professionals, and Breakthrough. Although the high schools have several resources to aid struggling students, none of the schools reported saying they have any programs to discover them. Overall, all of the APIs as well as the counselors believe mental health screenings would be beneficial for their student body.

## Discussion

Student survey results showed that even when adolescents are experiencing stress or anxiety often, many of them will not seek help on their own, thus causing these struggling students to be overlooked. Despite this, students still believe mental health is as important as physical health. As seen in the results, a large percentage of the students thought school-based mental health checks could be beneficial, especially those whose answers displayed they experience stress or anxiety often. Most parents responded stating they believe their child is stressed or anxious only sometimes whereas many students responded stating they experience these issues always or very often. Likewise, parents also believed their children were seeking help more often than the students reported they actually do. Furthermore, parent results showed they do find mental health to be as important as physical health and a vast majority stated they believe mental health checks would be beneficial therefore they would advocate for this type of program for their child.

## Conclusion/Future Research

Despite setbacks, the study was still able to gather useful information to conclude that mental wellness checks are necessary and could be beneficial for high school students within the CVUSD. It also found that students, parents, APIs, and counselors alike believe these checks could be advantageous for their high school. Although this study does not fully answer the question as to whether or not this is entirely feasible for the CVUSD, it does introduce potential drawbacks and successfully provides insight into the community views surrounding the concept. To further this research, the next step would be speaking with the district leaders of the CVUSD to see what their opinions are regarding the questionnaires and what kind of process this program would have to undergo in order to be included.

## References

- Allen, P. L., & McGuire, L. (2011). Incorporating mental health checkups into adolescent primary care visits. *Pediatric Nursing*, 37, 137-140. ISSN: 0097-9805
- Chorpita, B. F., Ebesutani, C., & Higa-McMillan, C. K. (2011). A psychometric analysis of the revised child anxiety and depression scales-parent version in a school sample. *Journal of Abnormal Psychology*, 39, 173-185. Doi: 10.1007/s10802-010-9460-8