



# **A Survey on Undocumented College Students' Use of Mental Health Services**

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## **Important Note When Interpreting the Findings**

The findings are based on self-reported survey data collected at one point in time. We cannot make claims of causality (e.g., deportation concerns cause poor sleep quality), and students' experiences likely change over time. Further, undocumented college students are a diverse group of students. Their experiences may vary by nationality, race, religious identity, gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, type of college, having DACA or not having DACA, attending college in a particular state, etc. Lastly, experiences reported here may not be generalizable to the larger population of undocumented college students in the United States.

# SURVEY STUDY DETAILS

**Recruitment:** Between January and June 2019, Dr. Jennifer Kam emailed recruitment flyers to Undocumented Student Services, "DREAM" Centers, and Undocumented Student Associations at four-year colleges and community colleges in 10 states, including AZ, CA, IL, TX, and MA.

**Participant Payment:** \$10 Amazon gift cards for filling out the 25-minute online survey.

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## Undocumented College Students

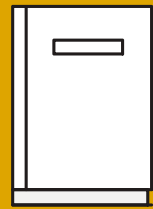
77%  
Women



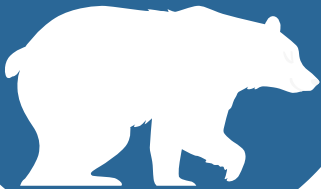
90%  
Undergraduates



75%  
Four-Year College



86%  
California



80%  
Born in Mexico



49%  
University of  
California



21  
Mean Age

18-40  
Age Range

73%  
DACA



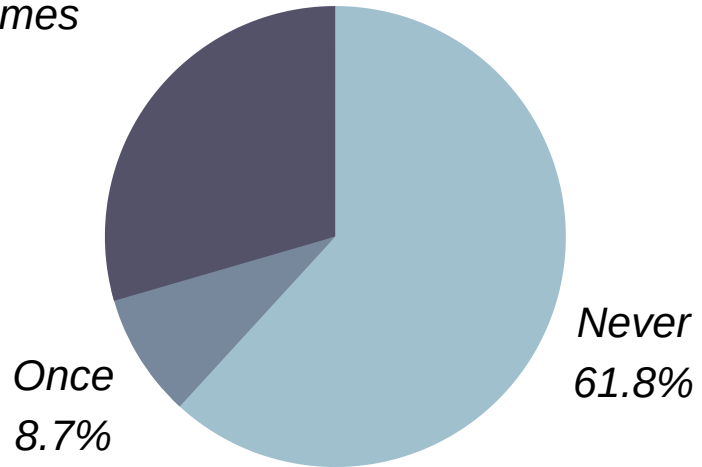
94%  
Had lived 11+ years  
in the U.S.



# UTILIZATION OF ON-CAMPUS MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

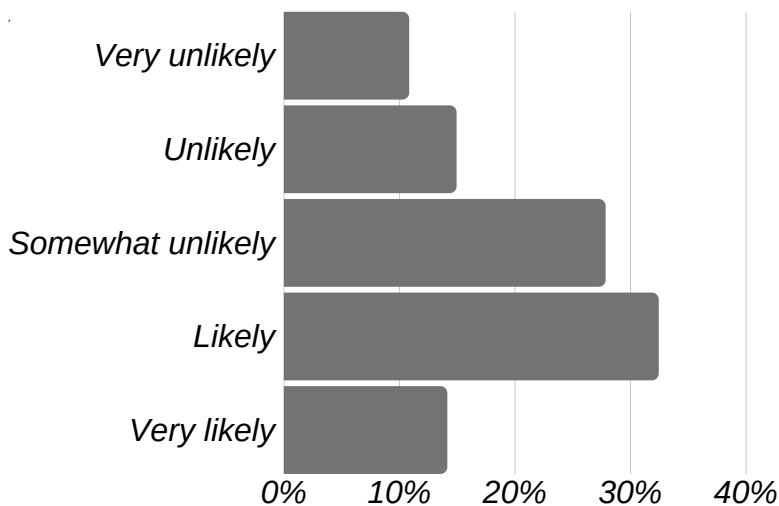
Since starting college, how many times students have talked to an on-campus MHP:

Two or more times  
29.5%

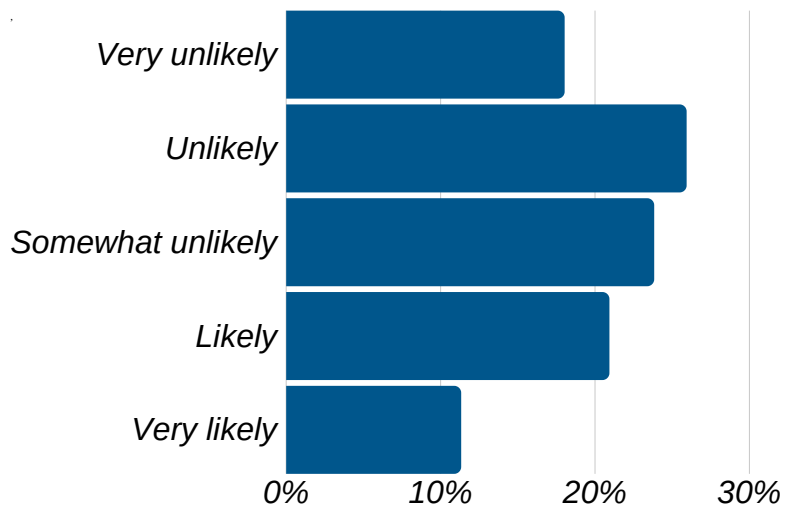


If students **needed to talk to an MHP**, how likely would they talk to one on campus?

Mean = 3.24



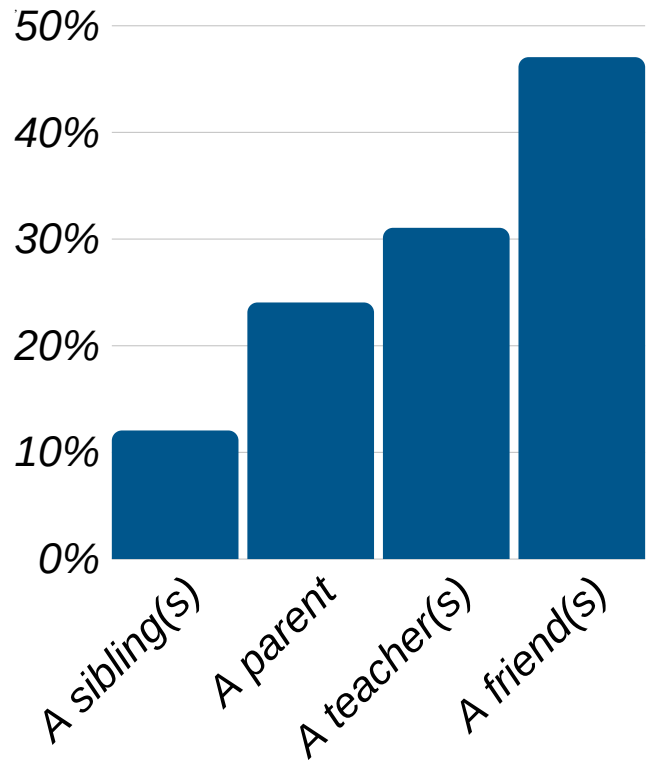
If they **felt stressed about their undocumented status**, how likely would they talk to an on-campus MHP? Mean = 2.82



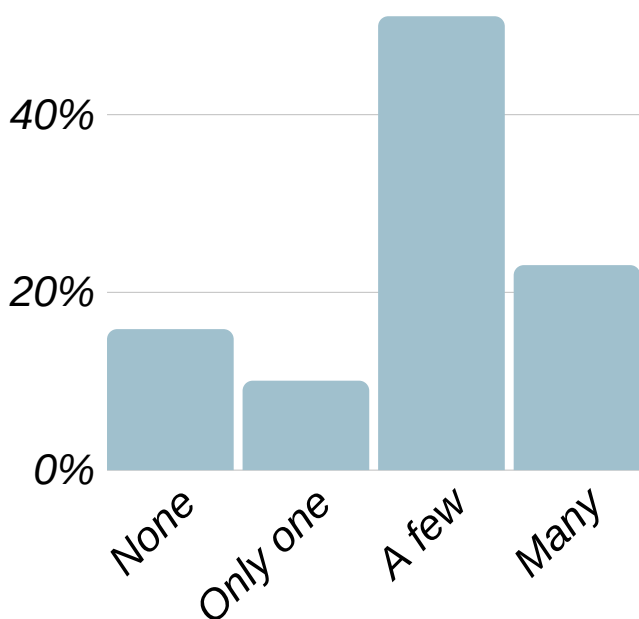
# UTILIZATION OF ON-CAMPUS MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Have any of the following people encouraged you to talk to a mental health professional?

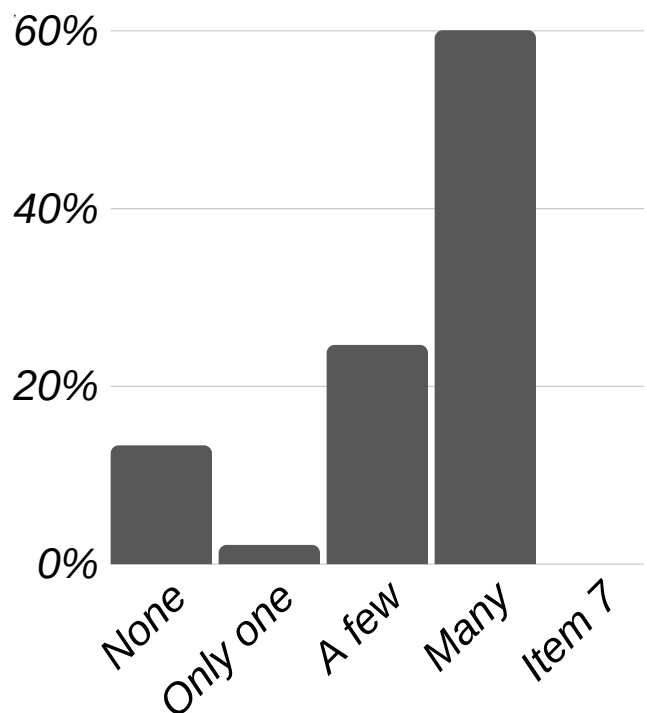
(Please check all that apply)



How many of your friends are DACA recipients?



How many of your friends are allies?



# REASONS FOR TALKING (OR NOT TALKING) TO AN ON-CAMPUS MENTAL HEALTH PROFESSIONAL (MHP)

## Descriptive Norms

Students' belief that others around them have talked to an on-campus MHP. **Mean = 2.81, SD = .97**



"You know other undocumented students who have talked to an on-campus mental health professional."

"Some of your friends, who are not undocumented, have talked to an on-campus mental health professional."

"Some of your friends, who are undocumented, have talked to an on-campus mental health professional."

**(1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree)**

## Family Norms

Students' belief that their family would disapprove of them for talking to an on-campus MHP. **Mean = 2.54, SD = .92**



"Think you posed a risk to the family if you talked to an on-campus mental health professional about your undocumented experiences."

"Think badly of you for talking to an on-campus mental health professional about your undocumented experiences."

"Think you are weak for talking to an on-campus mental health professional about your undocumented experiences."

# REASONS FOR TALKING (OR NOT TALKING) TO AN ON-CAMPUS MENTAL HEALTH PROFESSIONAL (MHP)

## Friends Norms

Students' belief that their friends would disapprove of them for talking to an on-campus MHP.

**Mean = 2.15, SD = .85**



"Think you posed a risk to others if you talked to an on-campus mental health professional about your undocumented experiences."

"Think badly of you for talking to an on-campus mental health professional about your undocumented experiences."

"Think you are weak for talking to an on-campus mental health professional about your undocumented experiences."

**(1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree)**

## MHP Effectiveness

Students' belief that talking to an on-campus MHP would help students manage their stress from being undocumented.

**Mean = 3.24, SD = .94**

"Talking to an on-campus mental health professional would help you deal with the stress from being undocumented."

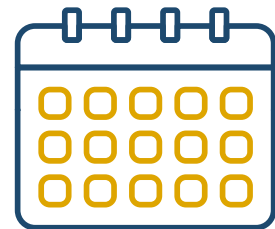
"If you talked to an on-campus mental health professional, you could better manage the stress from being undocumented."

# REASONS FOR TALKING (OR NOT TALKING) TO AN ON-CAMPUS MENTAL HEALTH PROFESSIONAL (MHP)

## Self-Efficacy

Students' belief that it would be easy to obtain an appointment with an on-campus MHP.

**Mean = 3.28, SD = .95**



"It would be easy for you to make an appointment with an on-campus mental health professional."

"You're confident you could get an appointment in a timely manner to talk to an on-campus mental health professional."

**(1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree)**

## Uncomfortable Talking to an MHP

The extent to which students feel uncomfortable talking about their undocumented experiences with an on-campus MHP and the extent to which they know how to talk about such experiences.

**Mean = 3.30, SD = 1.0**

"You would not know if you could talk to them about your undocumented experiences."

"You would feel uncomfortable talking to them about your situation as an undocumented student."

"You would not know how to talk about your undocumented experiences."



# REASONS FOR TALKING (OR NOT TALKING) TO AN ON-CAMPUS MENTAL HEALTH PROFESSIONAL (MHP)

(1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = unsure, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree)

## MHP Lack of Understanding

Students' belief that an on-campus MHP would not understand their undocumented experiences.

**Mean = 3.41, SD = 1.0**



"If you talked to an on-campus mental health professional, they would not understand your situation as an undocumented student."

"If you talked to an on-campus mental health professional, they would have little familiarity with undocumented students' experiences."

## Undeserving of Talking to an MHP

Students' belief that their stress is not significant enough to warrant talking to an on-campus MHP. **Mean = 3.16, SD = .96**

"Your undocumented-related stress is not serious enough to require talking to a mental health professional."

"Other college students are in more immediate need of assistance from a mental health professional than you."

"You don't want to take up a mental health professional's time with your concerns."

# REASONS FOR TALKING (OR NOT TALKING) TO AN ON-CAMPUS MENTAL HEALTH PROFESSIONAL (MHP)

(1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = unsure, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree)

## Crisis-Only

Students' would only talk to an on-campus MHP if they experienced a criss. Mean = 3.25, SD = 1.0

"You would only talk to a mental health professional if you were having a crisis."

"You would only talk to a mental health professional if you were at risk of harming yourself."

## Stigma

Students' belief that talking to an on-campus MHP would make them look bad. Mean = 2.42, SD = .85

Mean = 2.42, SD = .85



"You know other undocumented students who have talked to an on-campus mental health professional."

"Talking to an on-campus mental health professional would make you feel like there's something wrong with you."

"Seeking help from an on-campus mental health professional would make you feel inferior to others."

# REASONS FOR TALKING (OR NOT TALKING) TO AN ON-CAMPUS MENTAL HEALTH PROFESSIONAL (MHP)

## Unaffordable

Students thought on-campus MHP services would be too costly.



## Makes the Experience More Real

Students did not want to learn aspects of themselves that they did not like. They felt that talking to an MHP was "depressing." Felt that talking to an MHP would make their struggles "more real."



## Long Wait Time

Students felt that it would take a long time to get an appointment. MHP has limited availability.

## Student is Too Busy

Students were too busy to talk to an on-campus MHP. Too many other obligations (e.g., work, family, studies).



## Not on Campus

Students reported that they did not spend a lot of time on campus. Mostly took online classes. Difficult to talk to an MHP because they are rarely on campus.

# REASONS FOR TALKING (OR NOT TALKING) TO AN ON-CAMPUS MENTAL HEALTH PROFESSIONAL (MHP)

## Uninformed

Students did not know what MHP services are available on campus. Didn't know how to schedule an appointment. Didn't know what fees are involved. Didn't know if they are eligible for services because they're undocumented. Didn't know how to start the conversation. Didn't know how to talk about being undocumented with MHP.



## Going Against One's Culture/Family

Students reported that talking to an on-campus MHP was not acceptable to their family or culture. Family doesn't think mental health is a real issue. Told not to look weak. Deal with emotions and problems on your own.

## No Need to Talk to an MHP

Students reported feeling self-sufficient. Don't want to depend on others. Try to rely on themselves. Felt they are able to manage on their own.

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