

# **Bridging the Support Gap: An Exploration into Public Youth Services Librarians' Perceptions and Experiences Promoting Teens' Mental Health in the Library**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Over the past decade, U.S. teen mental health has declined rapidly. In the state of Florida, high rates of youth mental health challenges and lowered access to traditional mental health care has led to its ranking as the 19th worst in the nation. A “whole community” approach to mental health promotion has been advocated to address these concerns, and public libraries have been identified as potential partners in that endeavor. As part of its core competencies for library staff providing services to teens, YALSA has identified the importance of supporting teens’ emotional and social development through the provision of library programs and services that help teens cope with life’s challenges—an agenda that directly aligns with the CDC’s definition of mental health. But research exploring the perceptions and experiences of public youth services librarians in promoting this agenda is lacking. Using a mixed-methods approach consisting of surveys of and interviews with Florida public librarians responsible for providing teen library services and informed by Seligman’s Well-being Theory, the proposed research seeks to explore the perceptions and experiences of public librarians in promoting teens’ mental health in the library and identify any challenges or gaps in pre-service training/education in preparing them for this role.

## **ALISE RESEARCH TAXONOMY TOPICS**

Public libraries; Young adult services; Standards

## **AUTHOR KEYWORDS**

mental health; public youth services librarians; Florida

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