

Public Youth Services Librarians' Perceptions Towards and Experiences in Promoting Teens' Positive Mental Health: A Mixed Methods Study

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ABSTRACT

Over the last decade, teen mental health has declined rapidly. In Florida, high rates of youth mental health concerns and lowered access to care led to its ranking as the 19th worst in the nation. To help address these issues, a “whole community” approach to mental health promotion has been advocated, with public libraries identified as potential partners. But research exploring public youth librarians' perceptions and experiences related to this agenda is lacking. Informed by Seligman's well-being theory, this study addresses that gap by exploring public youth librarians' perceptions towards and experiences in promoting teens' positive mental health through an explanatory sequential mixed-methods design consisting of surveys of and interviews with Florida public librarians responsible for teen services.

Survey results (n=183) showed that most librarians viewed promoting teens' positive mental health as an important part of their role and engaged in a variety of related activities. But challenges in carrying out these activities were identified as well as concerns related to professional boundaries and training. Interviews (n=30) further explored how librarians define the scope of their role and their experiences, including any training and support received and challenges related to promoting teens' positive mental health. Findings provide greater understanding of what members of the profession are doing and what they perceive as their role in response to declining teen mental health, thus improving service provision by informing future education and training efforts and the development of new models for how to best promote teens' mental health through a holistic lens.

ALISE RESEARCH TAXONOMY TOPICS

public libraries; young adult services; continuing education

AUTHOR KEYWORDS

mental health; public youth services librarians; Florida; professional boundaries

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