

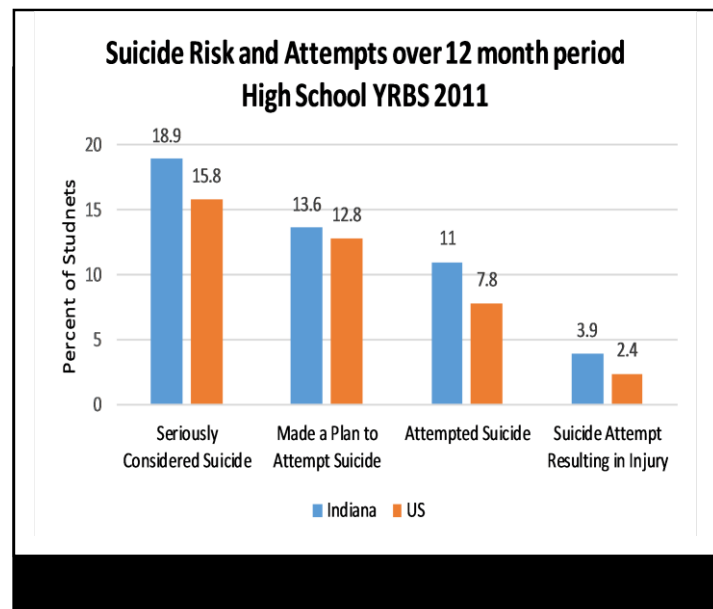


Indiana Association of School Psychologists  
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## Creating positive school climates: Increased academic engagement and student achievement

Indiana has an increasing number of behavioral and mental health issues, in our schools and communities.

- The incidence of suicide and suicide attempts among school-age youth across our state has risen and is above the national average. In any given school, approximately 1 of 5 students has seriously considered suicide and 1 of 10 has made a plan to attempt suicide.
- Substance abuse among Indiana youth is also a significant concern. Nearly one in three students have experimented with illegal drugs by the time they complete 8th grade and 41% have consumed alcohol (Gassman et al., 2015). Substance abuse among adolescents is connected to trauma in a complex way – each increases the likelihood of the adolescent experiencing the other (National Child Traumatic Stress Network, 2008).
- Incidents of discipline, including suspension and expulsion, have increased and indicate disproportionate practices for diverse ethnic groups and students with disabilities. Indiana was one of five states in the country that reported male suspension rates higher than the national average for every racial/ethnic group and higher gaps between the suspension rates of black students and white students for both boys and girls (USDOE Office for Civil Rights, 2014).



## **Schools have a unique ability and responsibility to meet the behavioral health and social-emotional needs of children and youth.**

- Healthy, effective learning environments start with healthy, focused students. A positive learning environment includes both academic and behavioral/mental health supports.
- Positive discipline strategies helps children and youth learn the skills needed to cope with life's challenges and manage their own behavior (Bear, 2010).
- Students experience a range of mental health problems - many involve thinking, mood, and behavior – which they don't leave at the school door. In a high school of 750 students, about 150 students will experience a mental illness that interferes with their learning behavior and well over 100 of those students will not get the help they need (Rossen and Cowan, 2014).
- Mental and behavioral health services exist on a continuum including prevention and early intervention, intervention to reduce emerging problems, and individualized and intensive treatment.
- Coordinated school- and community- based services are important for seamless and efficient services and engage families as meaningful partners who can be empowered in their role to support mental and behavior health.

## **School psychologists are uniquely qualified members of school teams that support students' ability to learn and teachers' ability to teach.**

- School psychologists apply expertise in mental health, learning, and behavior, to help children and youth succeed academically, socially, behaviorally, and emotionally.
- School psychologists partner with families, teachers, school administrators, and other professionals to create safe, healthy, and supportive learning environments that strengthen connections between home, school, and the community.
- A potentially underutilized resource, school psychologists, can help schools successfully improve academic achievement and promote positive behavior and mental health for all students.

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