

FEBRUARY 2022 · VOLUME 2

MENTAL NOTES

CAL-HOSA MENTAL HEALTH NEWSLETTER



In This Issue

Seasonal Affective Disorder

Chapter Spotlight

Resources & Events

Did You Know?

- In a given year, about **five percent** of the U.S. population experiences seasonal depression.
- **Four out of five people** who have seasonal depression are women.
- The prevalence of seasonal depression is anywhere from **0-10 percent** of the population, depending on the geographic region.
- Typically, **the further one is from the equator**, the more at risk they are for seasonal depression.

<https://www.mhanational.org/conditions/seasonal-affective-disorder-sad>

Seasonal Affective Disorder

Seasonal Affective Disorder (Also known as SAD or by its proper diagnosis “Major Depressive Disorder with a Seasonal Pattern”) is a major source of concern for anyone who struggles with mental health through the holidays and the long winters. It affects everyone from students to tenured professors.

Unlike more common cases of depression, which usually manifests in the form of weight loss and restlessness, people with SAD typically have the following symptoms:

- Oversleeping
- Low energy and daytime fatigue
- Overeating, weight gain, and craving carbohydrates and sugary foods.
- Lack of general interest and decreased socialization

More severe patients have been known to express suicidal thoughts and feelings of hopelessness. (National Alliance on Mental Illness, 2017)



Seasonal Affective Disorder in Students and Teachers

Students and teachers alike struggle through the winter months. The pressure of end of year academics, college prep, and deadlines can be a major source of stress and anxiety of these groups. Students who find themselves moving from their warmer southern hometowns to colleges in the north and New England have been shown to be at a larger risk for SAD. A survey of several college students published in the Journal of American College Health showed this to be the case. (Low & Feissner, 1998)

Teachers are just as affected by the struggles of mental health during the winter. Teacher Renee Ekstrand filed a lawsuit claiming that the non-natural light in her classroom and lack of windows providing natural light contributed to her seasonal affective disorder. It was proven in court and through several appeals that the Americans with Disabilities Act was not correctly applied in this case, making her concerns valid. (Renae Ekstrand v. School District of Somerset, 2012)

**“IN THE MIDST OF WINTER I
FOUND THERE WAS WITHIN
ME AN INVINCIBLE SUMMER”**

- ALBERT CAMUS

Seasonal Affective Disorder Treatment

As suggested by researchers at NAMI, light exposure is a huge contributing factor to Seasonal Affective Disorder. In addition to traditional methods to fight depression, such as medication, therapy, and exercise, light therapy via use of a light box is shown to be an effective method in fighting SAD. This device provides natural light and has been shown to have a tangible effect on the users mood and wellbeing. (National Alliance on Mental Illness, 2017)

Any kind of depression is a serious matter, if you or a friend or family member need help in an immediate crisis utilize the resources below:

- If you or someone you love is in immediate danger, call 911, make sure to notify the operator that it is a psychiatric emergency.
- Contact the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline 800-273-TALK (8255)
- Crisis Text Line - Text NAMI to 741-741 to connect with a trained crisis counselor free 24/7
- Utilize the resources at <https://www.nami.org/help>

Chapter Spotlight



The Valencia High School Medical Sciences Academy was honored to be a part of the Cal-HOSA Mental Health Pilot Project. VHS students in the Academy explored and identified needs on campus and developed a plan to support the mental health of students and staff. As a part of our PEI project, our students lobbied for and helped design and develop our Wellness Center, which now serves our entire campus with a licensed clinical social worker as well as interns from the local college. Students have also initiated a Bring Change to Mind club on campus, in which they educate peers about mental health topics and provide a safe space for discussions. Additionally, student leaders have facilitated difficult discussions about suicide prevention alongside our social work staff.

Our students continue to work on building bridges between all stakeholders in our community, including parents, staff, and students through open forum discussions. These students worked to get the Mental and Behavioral Health pathway as a third option within the Medical Sciences Academy, so that those interested could dive deeper into this profession. Pathway students are learning about the history of mental health, prevention, diagnostics, and treatments available, as well as health care systems through the junior level course "Mind Matters: A Study of Mental Health and Illness". They have heard from multiple guest speakers, including some from NAMI (the National Alliance on Mental Illness), the VA (Veterans Affairs), and outreach organizations for at-risk populations. Cal-HOSA students from VHS will also be participating in the Directing Change public service announcement competition, and recently received a grant to fund their projects. Overall, VHS Cal-HOSA students are working at the forefront of the student mental health movement. They are proud to be the leaders, advocates, and designers of the future of mental health care.

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Save The Date!

EVENTS ON HOSA, MENTAL HEALTH, & MORE

February 15-17 & 22, 2022

RCE Online Testing/Events

February 16, 2022 at 10:00 AM PST

County And State Data: Mapping The Mental Health
Of Our Communities Webinar

[Register here](#)

March 4-11, 2022

SLC Registration

**Cal-HOSA State Officers post mental health facts
every Monday on Cal-HOSA's social media platforms**



Resources

- [Teachers Are More Likely to Experience Depression Symptoms Than Other Adults](#)
- [Seasonal Affective Disorder in Teens](#)
- [Seasonal Affective Disorder in College Students](#)
- [Seasonal Affective Disorder in Children and Adolescents](#)
- [Combating Seasonal Affective Disorder in Schools](#)

Cal-HOSA's MHWPEII project is funded by Kaiser Permanente



References

- **Low, D. K., & Feissner, J. M. (1998). Seasonal Affective Disorder in College Students: Prevalence and Latitude. *Journal of American College Health*, 135-137.**
- **National Alliance on Mental Illness. (2017, August). NAMI - Major Depressive Disorder with a Seasonal Pattern. Retrieved from NAMI.ORG: <https://www.nami.org/About-Mental-Illness/Mental-Health-Conditions/Depression/Major-Depressive-Disorder-with-a-Seasonal-Pattern>**
- **Renaek Ekstrand v. School District of Somerset, 11-1949 (Seventh Circuit Court of Appeals June 26, 2012).**