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Survey Results: Strengthening Youth Mentor & Mental Health Services in Schools

Empowering Students Through Mentorship and Mental Health Services

The need for youth mentorship and mental health services in schools is more urgent than ever. In 2024, we analyzed data from the 100% Community Survey, initially conducted in 2019 by the [Doña Ana County Resilience Leaders](#), to assess the changing needs for these vital services. The 100% Community initiative, a program of [NMSU's Anna_Age Eight Institute](#), provides New Mexico counties with a collaborative framework to transform under-resourced communities into fully resourced environments.

Recent events, including the tragic violence at Young Park in recent weeks, serve as a heartbreaking reminder of the challenges our youth face. Now more than ever, it is critical to strengthen mentorship opportunities and expand access to mental health resources.

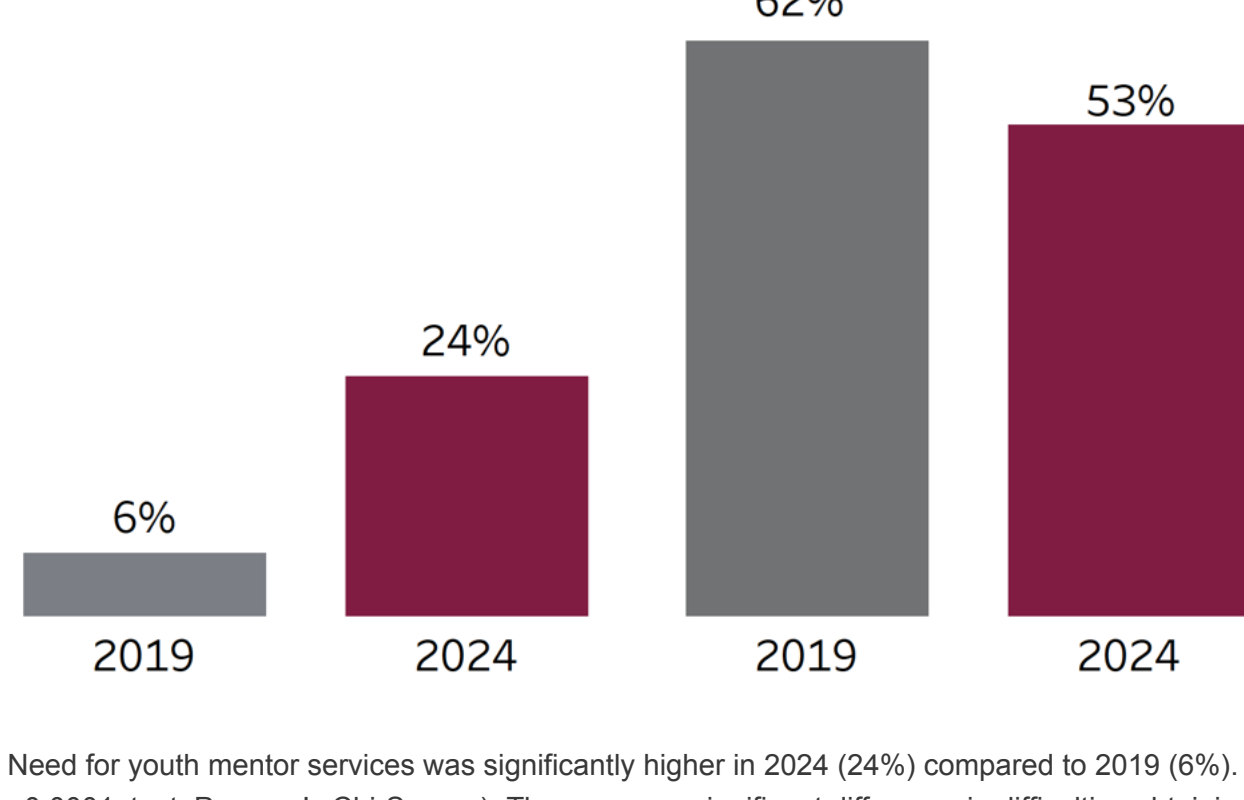
Survey results highlight the growing demand for support and the persistent barriers families and students face. As mental health challenges continue to rise, mentorship has become crucial to student success. Here's what we discovered—and how we can take action.

[Click here to explore the 100% Community Survey results for youth mentor and mental health services at school](#)

Rising Needs, Persistent Barriers: Addressing Youth Mentorship and Mental Health Services in Schools

The 100% Community Survey revealed a significant rise in demand for youth mentorship and mental health services since 2019. By 2024, the need for mentorship services in the community has quadrupled, rising from 6% in 2019 to 24%. Additionally, just over half (53%) of respondents who needed mentorship services for their children reported encountering barriers to access, such as long waitlists and high costs. While still a challenge, this marks an improvement from the 62% who reported similar obstacles in 2019.

Percentage of Respondents in Doña Ana County Who Needed Youth Mentor Services for Their Children and Experienced Difficulties Obtaining Them, by Year

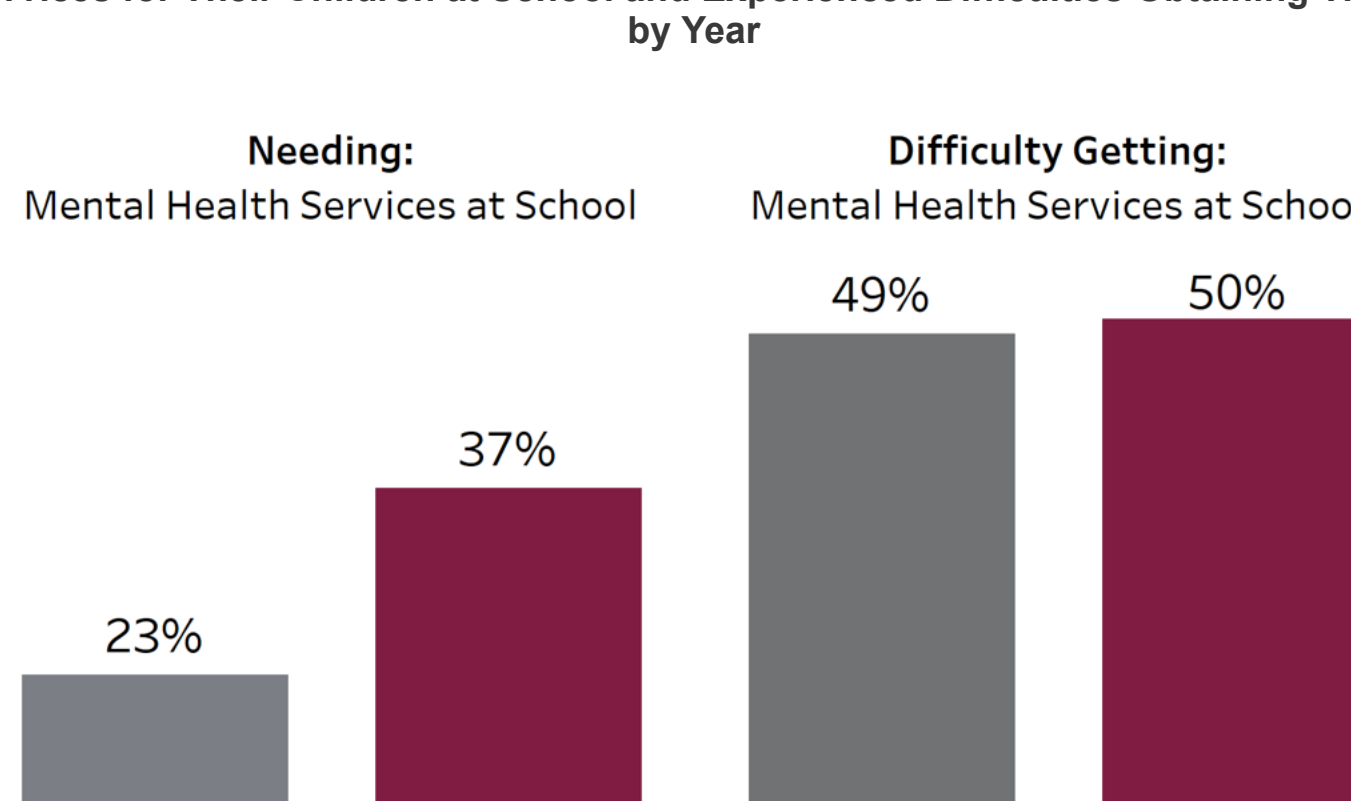


Note: Need for youth mentor services was significantly higher in 2024 (24%) compared to 2019 (6%). (p-value <0.0001, test: Pearson's Chi-Square). There was no significant difference in difficulties obtaining youth mentor services between years. Source: 100% Community Surveys for Doña Ana County, 2019 and 2024.

The 2023 New Mexico Youth Risk & Resiliency Survey (YRRS) highlights a critical gap in trusted adult relationships among high school students. Nearly half (49%) of Doña Ana high school students feeling sad or hopeless reported lacking a caring relationship with at least one adult in their community. Similarly, 48% disagreed with the statement, "Teachers and other adults at my school care about me" (1). This trend extends to middle school, where 44% of Doña Ana students disagreed that they have satisfying and supportive relationships with adults at school. (2) These findings emphasize the need for mentorship programs to provide the support and trusted adults students lack.

The YRRS also aligns with the 100% Community Survey, which shows a significant increase in demand for school-based mental health services—from 23% in 2019 to 37% in 2024. The need is most acute in Hatch Valley Public Schools, where 74% of parents reported their children needed mental health services, compared to 46% in Las Cruces and 32% in Gadsden. Despite this, half of respondents reported difficulties accessing these services, primarily due to a shortage of counselors and mental health professionals in schools.

Percentage of Respondents in Doña Ana County Who Needed Mental Health Services for Their Children at School and Experienced Difficulties Obtaining Them, by Year



Note: Need for mental health services in schools was significantly higher in 2024 (37%) compared to 2019 (23%). (p-value <0.0001, test: Pearson's Chi-Square). There was no significant difference in difficulties obtaining mental health services in schools between years. Source: 100% Community Surveys for Doña Ana County, 2019 and 2024.

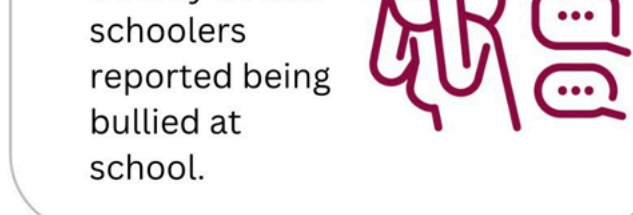
[Click here to explore the 100% Community Survey results for youth mentor and mental health services at school](#)

The State of Student Well-Being

Mental health among school-aged children has always been important, but it has become even more urgent since 2020. The pandemic triggered a sharp rise in anxiety, depression, and suicidal behaviors among students (3). Stress from home life, financial instability, concerns about the future, and personal safety have intensified feelings of anxiety and hopelessness. Many students also report that social, political, environmental, and financial issues significantly impact their mental well-being (4).

The widespread use of social media has worsened feelings of depression, anxiety, and low self-esteem, while bullying—both in-person and online—remains an issue (5).

According to the YRRS, 42% of surveyed Doña Ana County middle school students reported experiencing bullying at school. Among those students, 47% felt teachers and staff did not care about them (6). Additionally, more than one in four students experienced cyberbullying. Social media complicates parents' ability to monitor interactions, and many bullying victims choose not to report their experiences.



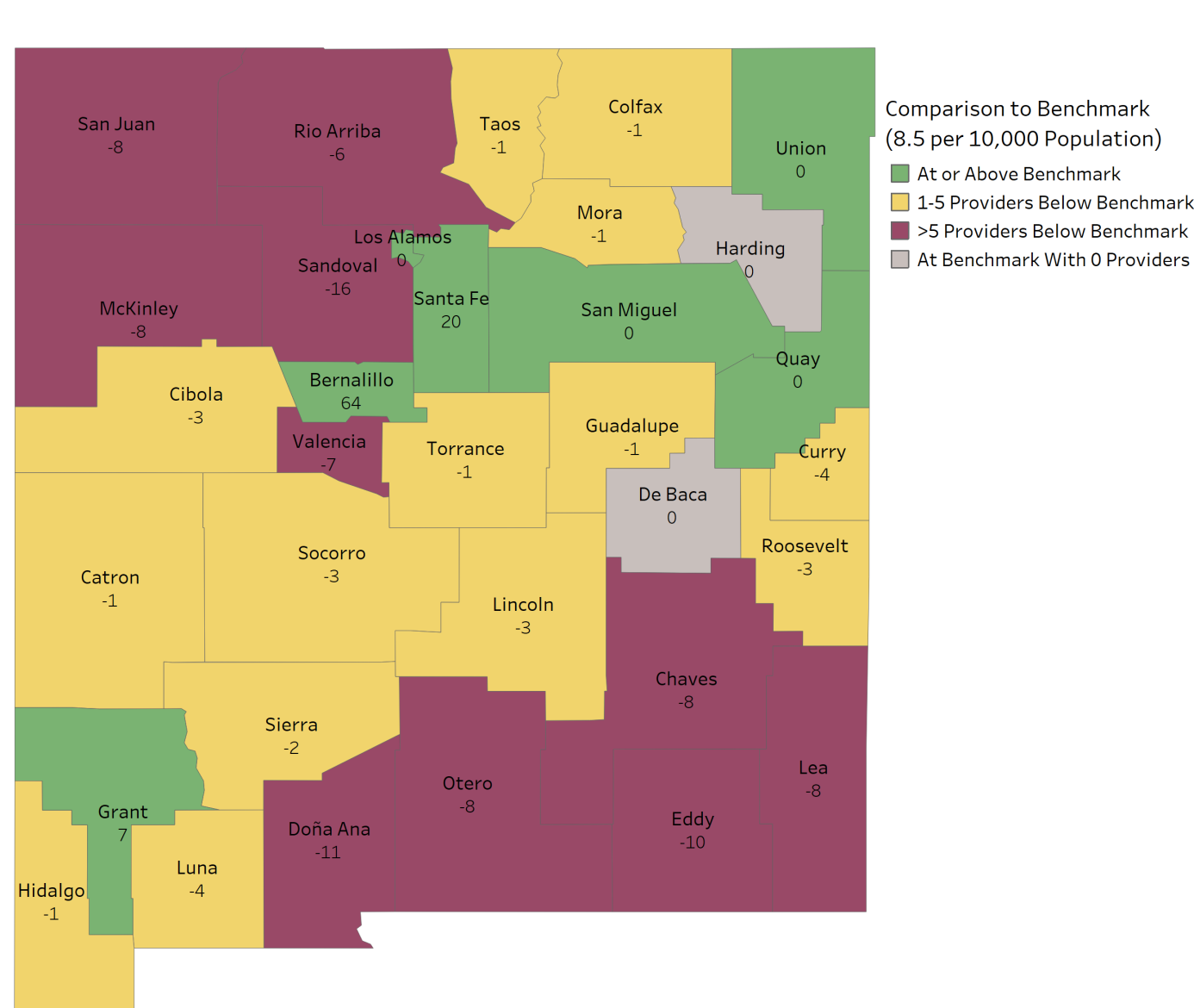
Source: New Mexico Youth Risk and Resiliency Survey, Middle School Survey Results 2023, Doña Ana County.

On a positive note, awareness of mental health issues is rising, and young people are increasingly open to seeking help. Research shows Gen Zers are more likely to have received treatment or therapy from a mental health professional—37% of them, compared to 26% of Gen Xers and 22% of baby boomers (7).

Mental Health Workforce Gap

Southern New Mexico faces a significant shortage of healthcare providers, particularly for mental health services and psychiatry. In Doña Ana County alone, there is a need for 11 more psychiatrists to meet the benchmark of 1.6 psychiatrists per 10,000 residents (8). This gap heavily impacts the region's youth population, with children often waiting months to access mental health care (9).

Psychiatrists Compared to Benchmark, 2021



Source: New Mexico Legislative Finance Committee Brief: Health and Human Services, UNM Health Care Workforce Committee 2023 Annual Report.

State Senator Jerry Ortiz y Pino reports that the lack of culturally competent therapists in New Mexico is another challenge (10). This lack creates barriers for people of color, making it harder to find providers who understand their unique experiences and needs. This shortage leaves many young people without timely care, making youth mentorship programs even more critical. These programs offer emotional support, helping students build coping skills, self-esteem, and pro-social behaviors. Research shows 58% of students in mentorship programs feel their mentor supports their mental health (11).

With students spending much time at school, offering mental health and mentorship services on campus could address obstacles like cost, transportation, and scheduling conflicts. While many New Mexico schools, including twelve in Doña Ana County, have school-based health centers, access to care remains challenging.

By 2024, the need for mentorship services in the community quadrupled, from 6% in 2019 to 24%.

Take Action

The growing demand for mentorship and school-based mental health services highlights the urgent need for accessible, consistent student support. Ensuring their success requires a community-wide effort to expand and strengthen these vital resources.

In Doña Ana County, organizations like [Families & Youth Innovations Plus \(FYI+\)](#), [Big Brothers Big Sisters Mountain Region](#), and the Hazlo Program at [Cruces Creatives](#) are making a difference. The [Success Partnership's Kinder to Career Coalition](#) is building a youth internship program and other initiatives to engage youth. Additionally, the Resilience Leaders conducted this survey to understand local needs better and drive meaningful solutions, ensuring every student has access to essential support. The [Doña Ana Resilience Leaders Youth Mentor Sector](#) meets on the first Wednesday of every month at noon, providing a key opportunity to participate in mentorship efforts.

Get involved today—connect with the [Doña Ana Resilience Leaders Youth Mentor Sector](#) and help strengthen mentorship in our community.

- Sources:
- (1) [New Mexico Youth Risk and Resiliency Survey: High School Survey Results 2023, Doña Ana County](#)
 - (2) (6) [New Mexico Youth Risk and Resiliency Survey: Middle School Survey Results 2023, Doña Ana County](#)
 - (3) [Impact of COVID-19 on the lives and mental health of children and adolescents](#)
 - (4) (9) [Online Z kids struggle with mental health across Southern NM](#)
 - (5) [Online bullying concerns rise as New Mexico students return to school](#)
 - (7) [Gen Z more likely to report mental health concerns](#)
 - (8) [New Mexico Legislative Finance Committee Brief: Health and Human Services](#)
 - (10) [Some mental health issues on the rise in New Mexico](#)
 - (11) [The connection between improved mental health and youth mentoring](#)

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