

# Help-Seeking Behaviors

Partners in Prevention (PIP) is a statewide coalition of 21 public and private colleges and universities in Missouri with the mission of building safe and healthy campuses. PIP tracks students' high-risk behaviors and behaviors that promote health and wellness through the annual implementation of the Missouri Assessment of College Health Behaviors (MACHB) survey. By examining student mental health concerns, PIP can track the overall wellbeing of Missouri college students. This brief focuses specifically on the help-seeking behaviors of White/European/Caucasian and African American/Native African students' help-seeking behaviors from 2013 to 2017.

## Improvements in Help-Seeking Behaviors

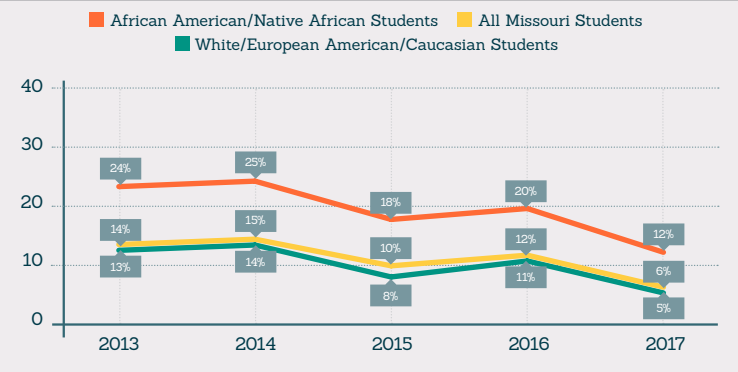
"Help-Seeking Behaviors" refer to the extent to which students feel that they can utilize on and off-campus resources when personal concerns arise. Improvements have been made over the last five years in terms of students' help-seeking behaviors. Of all students who responded to the survey in 2013, only 26% percent felt that they could go to the University Counseling Center whereas in 2017, 48% indicated their University Counseling Center as a place they felt they could seek help. Schools that utilize "Ask Listen Refer", PIP's online suicide prevention training program, provide monthly and quarterly reports that indicate increased student outreach efforts from 2013 to 2017.



Students have also displayed improvements in the rates at which they felt they could seek help from multiple resources. Specifically, in 2013, 14% of all students indicated that they felt they could go to no one on campus when personal concerns arose as opposed to 6.2% in 2017. A majority of students feel they can seek help from friends (83%) and parents (77%).

Although there has been an improvement in help-seeking behaviors among all students over the last five years, **12% of African American Students** still feel that they can go to no one on campus when personal concerns arise as opposed to **5% of white students.**

## % Students Who Feel Like They Can Go to No One on Campus When Personal Concerns Arise



## Disparities in Help-Seeking Behaviors

There is a disparity that exists between African American and White students' help seeking behaviors. This disparity has been a common trend since 2013 when 24% of African American students reported that they felt they could go to no one on campus when personal concerns arose versus 13% of white students. Although there has been an improvement in help-seeking behaviors among all students over the last five years, 12% of African American Students still feel that they can go to no one on campus when personal concerns arise as opposed to 5% of white students. This trend holds true for the rates at which students feel they can utilize the University Counseling Center as a resource with an 11% difference between African American and white students (38% and 49%, respectively). As campuses continue to address the mental health concerns of their student populations, initiatives to target the disparities between populations should be implemented.

For more information, visit [pip.missouri.edu](http://pip.missouri.edu)

One resource that campuses can use to address this disparity is the Equity in Mental Health Framework, which seeks to support the emotional health and well-being and mental health of students of color ([www.equityinmentalhealth.org](http://www.equityinmentalhealth.org)). The Equity in Mental Health Framework was created by The Steve Fund in partnership with the JED foundation, and outlines ten specific recommendations and implementation strategies for campuses across the United States. These implementation strategies are relevant, and this is evidenced by the supported claims in the PIP data that suggest that African American students are less likely to seek help than their white counterparts. Implementation strategies include the creation of opportunities to engage around national and international issues, and the utilization of culturally relevant programs with a component of data collection to assess effectiveness.

## Summary

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Although students' help seeking feelings have improved across PIP schools over the last five years, there is a racial disparity among our campuses in terms of the extent to which certain groups feel they can seek help from others. The impact of addressing disparities has proven to increase health outcomes for student populations as a whole. In order to continue to improve the mental health and wellness of all Missouri students, campuses can utilize relevant resources such as the Equity in Mental Health Framework.

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