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## Youth Mental Health in the Mountain West

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## YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH IN THE MOUNTAIN WEST

Health Fact Sheet No. 15 | April 2022

Prepared by: Kristian Thymianos, Olivia K. Cheche, Kelliann Beavers,  
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### PURPOSE:

This fact sheet explores youth mental health metrics of Mountain West states from the Hopeful Futures Campaign's 2022 report, *America's School Mental Health Report Card*.<sup>1</sup> This study provides state snapshots on school mental health policies and workforce availability for all 50 states and the District of Columbia. The Mountain West states of Arizona, Colorado, Nevada, New Mexico, and Utah are considered here.

### ABOUT THE DATA:

The data in this fact sheet present the overall state ranks for mental health in 2015, 2020, 2021, and 2022. Additionally, this fact sheet provides data for the number of children with major depression and the number of children with major depression who did not receive treatment in Mountain West states. Hopeful Futures' 2022 *America's School Mental Health Report Card* retrieved these data in 2021 from Mental Health America's (MHA) report, *The State of Mental Health in America*,<sup>2</sup> along with projections for total numbers of K-12 students in 2022 from The National Center for Education Statistics' 2014 publication, *Projection of Education Statistics to 2022*.<sup>3</sup>

### KEY FINDINGS:

1. Nevada ranks 51<sup>st</sup> and last among the 50 states and the District of Columbia in overall youth mental health rankings for the years 2015, 2020, 2021, and 2022.
2. About 289,000 children in the Mountain West have major depression: AZ (7.38%); CO (6.71%); NV (7.79%); NM (8.71%); UT (7.87%).
3. Among Mountain West states, Colorado has the lowest percentage (2.06%) of children with major depression who did not receive treatment. Arizona has the highest percentage and number (5.21%; 67,000 children) of children with major depression who did not receive treatment.
4. In 2022, Nevada has the third lowest availability of school psychologists (one professional available for every 1,866 students, with a recommended ratio of 1:500) and the lowest availability of school social workers (one professional available for every 8,730 students, with a recommended ratio of 1:250). Nevada's school mental health workforce is operating with 26.8% of the recommended number of school psychologists, and 2.9% of the recommended number of school social workers.

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<sup>1</sup> Hopeful Futures Campaign, "America's School Mental Health Report Card." 2022. [https://hopefulfutures.us/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/FINAL-EDITS-Master\\_022322.pdf](https://hopefulfutures.us/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/FINAL-EDITS-Master_022322.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> Mental Health America (MHA), "State of Mental Health America." October 2021. <https://www.mhanational.org/issues/state-mental-health-america>

<sup>3</sup> The National Center for Education Statistics, "Projection of Education Statistics to 2022." February 2014. <https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2014/2014051.pdf>

Table 1 shows the overall youth mental health rankings in each of the Mountain West states for the years 2015, 2020, 2021, and 2022. Nevada consistently ranks 51<sup>st</sup> in the nation for all years documented. Colorado experienced some of the largest rank changes in the years listed, ranging from 13<sup>th</sup> in 2020, to 42<sup>nd</sup> in 2021, and back to 13<sup>th</sup> in 2022.

**Table 1: Overall Mountain West State Ranks for Youth Mental Health, 2015, 2020, 2021, and 2022**

| State      | 2015             | 2020             | 2021             | 2022             |
|------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| Arizona    | 46 <sup>th</sup> | 30 <sup>th</sup> | 49 <sup>th</sup> | 49 <sup>th</sup> |
| Colorado   | 31 <sup>st</sup> | 13 <sup>th</sup> | 42 <sup>nd</sup> | 13 <sup>th</sup> |
| Nevada     | 51 <sup>st</sup> | 51 <sup>st</sup> | 51 <sup>st</sup> | 51 <sup>st</sup> |
| New Mexico | 50 <sup>th</sup> | 41 <sup>st</sup> | 50 <sup>th</sup> | 47 <sup>th</sup> |
| Utah       | 23 <sup>rd</sup> | 32 <sup>nd</sup> | 32 <sup>nd</sup> | 32 <sup>nd</sup> |

\* Adapted from *America's School Mental Health Report Card* by the Hopeful Futures Campaign.

Table 2 displays data on major depression in youth by Mountain West state, including the number of children with major depression, as well as the number of children with major depression who did not receive treatment. These figures are also presented as percentages of K-12 students, based on a 2022 projection for total number of K-12 students in each Mountain West state.

New Mexico has the highest percentage of children with depression (8.71%; 31,000 children), and Nevada has the second-highest percentage (7.79%; 42,000 children). The data for all Mountain West states indicate that about 289,000 children in the Mountain West have major depression: AZ (7.38%); CO (6.71%); NV (7.79%); NM (8.71%); UT (7.87%). Colorado has the lowest percentage (2.06%) of children with major depression who did not receive treatment. Arizona has the highest percentage and number (5.21%; 67,000 children) of children with major depression who did not receive treatment.

**Table 2: Major Depression in Youth by Mountain West State, 2022**

| Metric   | Arizona   | Colorado | Nevada  | New Mexico | Utah    |
|--|-----------|----------|---------|------------|---------|
| Number, K-12 Students (2022 Projection)                              | 1,287,000 | 969,000  | 539,000 | 356,000    | 712,000 |
| Number, Children with Major Depression                               | 95,000    | 65,000   | 42,000  | 31,000     | 56,000  |
| Percent, Children with Major Depression                              | 7.38%     | 6.71%    | 7.79%   | 8.71%      | 7.87%   |
| Number, Children with Major Depression Who Did Not Receive Treatment | 67,000    | 20,000   | 28,000  | 18,000     | 25,000  |
| Percent, Children with Major Depression Who Do Not Receive Treatment | 5.21%     | 2.06%    | 5.19%   | 5.06%      | 3.51%   |

\* Adapted from *America's School Mental Health Report Card* by the Hopeful Futures Campaign.

Table 3 displays the mental health workforce availability within each Mountain West state. Across all three types of school mental health professionals, each state has a lower workforce availability than recommended.

In 2022, Nevada has the third lowest availability of school psychologists (one professional available for every 1,866 students, with a recommended ratio of 1:500) and the lowest availability of school social workers (one professional available for every 8,730 students, with a recommended ratio of 1:250). Nevada’s school mental health workforce is operating with 26.8% of the recommended number of school psychologists, and 2.9% of the recommended number of school social workers.

Utah also has a low availability of school social workers, with one professional for every 8,198 students. Arizona has the lowest availability of school counselors, with one professional for every 905 students.

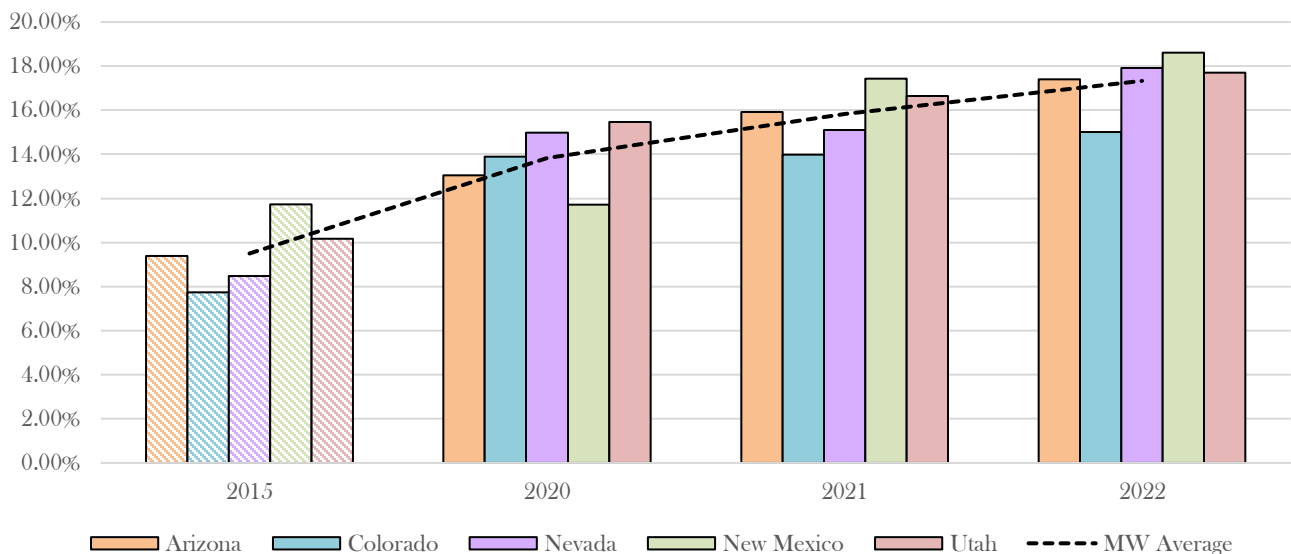
**Table 3: Mental Health Workforce by Mountain West State, 2022**

| Metric                                     | Recommended Ratio | Arizona | Colorado | Nevada  | New Mexico | Utah    |
|--|-------------------|---------|----------|---------|------------|---------|
| Ratio of School Psychologists to Students  | 1:500             | 1:1,593 | 1:1,578  | 1:1,866 | 1:3,673    | 1:2,720 |
| Ratio of School Social Workers to Students | 1:250             | 1:3,382 | 1:2,258  | 1:8,730 | 1:945      | 1:8,198 |
| Ratio of School Counselors to Students     | 1:250             | 1:905   | 1:324    | 1:544   | 1:473      | 1:591   |

\*Adapted from *America’s School Mental Health Report Card* by the Hopeful Futures Campaign.

Figure 1 displays the percentage of youth with at least one reported major depressive episode in the past year for the years 2015, 2020, 2021, and 2022. Between 2015 and 2022, New Mexico had the highest rates for three of the four reported years. Colorado has the lowest rates of youth with at least one major depressive episode except for 2020. The Mountain West average is shown in the dotted line, indicating an upward trend since 2015 in the percentage of youth reporting at least one major depressive episode.

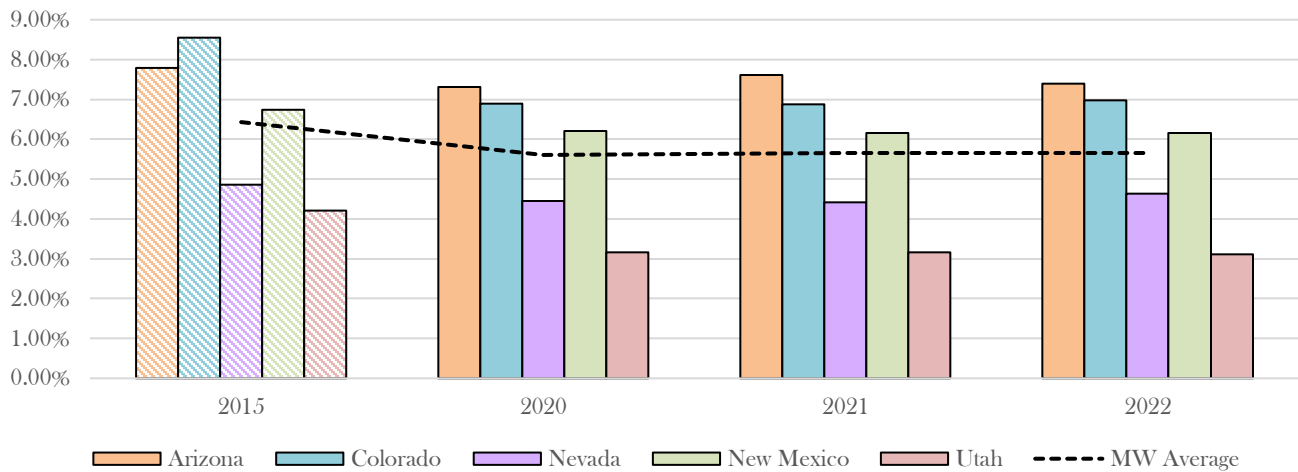
**Figure 1: Youth with At Least One Major Depressive Episode in the Past Year in Mountain West States, 2015, 2020, 2021, and 2022**



\*Adapted from *America’s School Mental Health Report Card* by the Hopeful Futures Campaign.

Figure 2 displays the percentage of students with a reported emotional disturbance for an individualized education program in Mountain West states for the years 2015, 2020, 2021, and 2022. From 2020 to 2022, the largest increase of students identified with emotional disturbance was in Arizona between the years 2020 and 2021 with an increase of .30 percentage points. Nevada had the next largest increase from 2021 to 2022 at .22 percentage points.

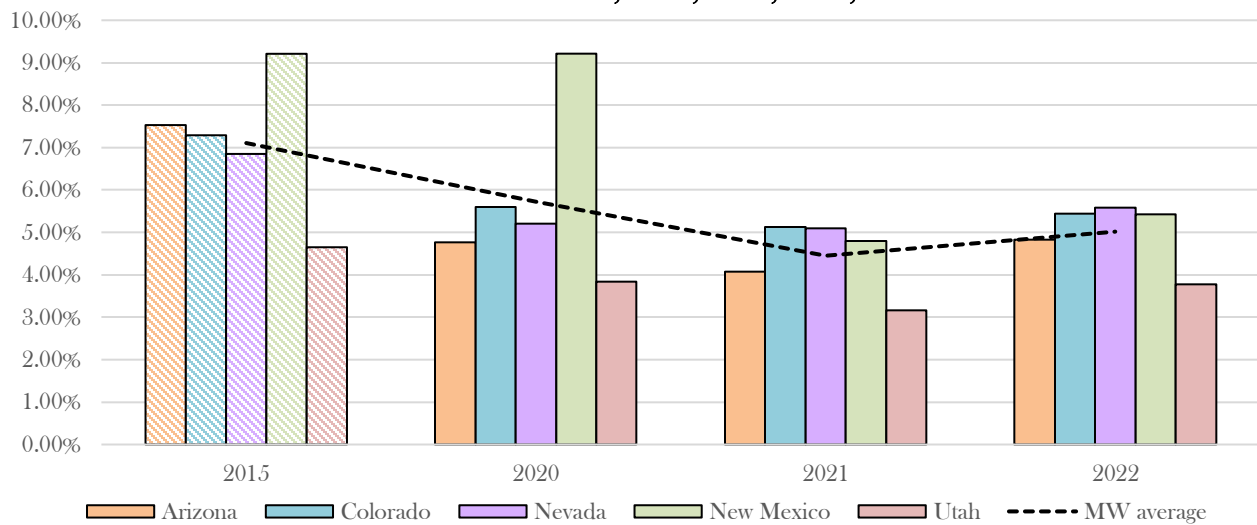
**Figure 2: Students Identified with Emotional Disturbance for an Individualized Education Program in Mountain West States, 2015, 2020, 2021, and 2022**



\*Adapted from *America's School Mental Health Report Card* by the Hopeful Futures Campaign.

Figure 3 displays the percentage of youth with reported substance use disorder in Mountain West states for the years 2015, 2020, 2021, and 2022. New Mexico reported the highest rates of youth with substance abuse disorder in the years 2015 and 2020 before a sharp decline in 2021. All states reported a decrease in youth substance abuse disorder in 2021 compared to 2020, and an increase from 2021 to 2022. Colorado and New Mexico were the only states to report a rate of youth substance use disorder in 2022 that was lower than reported rates in 2020.

**Figure 3: Youth with Substance Abuse Disorder in the Past Year in Mountain West States, 2015, 2020, 2021, and 2022**



\*Adapted from *America's School Mental Health Report Card* by the Hopeful Futures Campaign.