Back-to-School Blues? Latino Undergrads Are Less Likely to Seek Mental Health Help

As millions of college students return to in-person classes, research shows some students may be falling through the cracks.

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Right now, colleges across the United States are preparing for the return of in-person classes and new student residents, and many institutions may be facing an increased need for mental health services as they make the transition.

However, a new study shows that for some students of color, seeking help can be stigmatizing and is calling on schools and mental health professionals to step up to prevent students from falling through the cracks, NBC's KCRA reports.

The study, recently published in the Journal of Racial and Ethnic Health Disparities, found that Latino and Asian undergrads are significantly less likely to seek out mental health services than their white counterparts. Indeed, an estimated 65% of Latino students and 75% of Asian students go untreated for their conditions.

The study identified several factors contributing to the disparity: discrimination by providers, structural, financial and linguistic barriers, and cultural and family values that may discourage them from seeking care.

"Students perceive that it might bring shame or stigma to the family, and they worry," said senior study author Kalina Michalska, PhD, a psychology researcher at the University of California, Riverside. "Some of these values are shared across students, across ethnicities, and many of our students actually have really high values pertaining to family orientation, obligation," she continued, driving hesitancy in those having problems.

Moving forward, study authors recommend that institutions invest in increased outreach to at-risk students and offer culturally sensitive treatment services to those in need.

To learn more about how communities of color can improve their mental and social well-being, read "Minorities and Mental Health."

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