

HOPE SQUAD Information



What is Hope Squad?

Hope Squad is a school-based, peer-to-peer suicide prevention program that reduces the risk of youth suicide through age-appropriate education, training, and peer intervention. Hope Squads are run in district, charter, and online schools in Davis County.

How are Hope Squads run?

- Hope Squad student members are nominated by their classmates as trustworthy peers, then trained by advisors.
- Students in the Hope Squad meet at least once a month to learn about suicide prevention and the other areas of focus listed below. Junior Hope Squads in the elementary schools focus on mental wellness, anti-bullying, and resilience.
- Advisors are teachers, school counselors, or other school staff dedicated to helping students create a culture of help seeking and help giving in the schools. Hope Squads are required to follow a developed curriculum manual. Advisors have access to lesson plans, newsletters, and activity ideas on the Hope Squad online portal.
- The Hope Squads decide what activities, presentations, and events they are going to do to promote mental health, suicide awareness, resilience, and kindness.
- Each squad has a Hope Week event during the school year. This is a dedicated week where Hope Squads might challenge students and staff to commit to wellness and a culture of kindness, encourage everyone to be aware of their own mental and physical health, or even hold a walk or remembrance event.
- Secondary schools can have Hope Squad classes, while Junior Hope Squads meet before or after school.

Hope Squad Areas of Focus

1. Safety

Hope Squad members recognize the warning signs of suicide, reach out to peers in distress, and refer them to trusted adults.

2. Connection

Hope Squad members actively look for ways to support their peers and increase connections in their schools.

3. Bullying Prevention

Hope Squad members recognize bullying, intervene, and encourage other students not to be bystanders.

4. Mental Wellness

Hope Squad members promote resilience and self-care. They work closely with their local mental health agency.

5. Reducing Stigma

Hope Squad members reduce the stigma associated with mental illness/mental health and show that it's okay to get help.

6. Substance Abuse Prevention

Hope Squad members understand the complexity of substance abuse. They encourage peers to make healthy choices and struggling peers to get help.

How are Hope Squads currently funded?

- Each Hope Squad pays \$500 a year for access to Hope Squad curriculum and support services. This is paid to Hope4Utah by the district for schools in Davis School District. Charter and alternative schools pay separately.
- State policy restricts district funds from being used for food, Hope Squad t-shirts, or any additional swag.
- Each school acquires additional funds differently. Some receive support from the school's budget or PTA donations. Some Hope Squads fundraise to supplement their budget and run activities.

2023 Davis County Hope Squad Assessment Results

Background:

- Hope Squads are widely used as a suicide prevention program in Davis County schools.
- In 2023, there were Hope squads in all 27 secondary schools and 47 elementary schools.
- Community partners saw a need to evaluate if the program was working as intended, run to fidelity, and had the support needed.
- An objective to complete an assessment was written into the 2019 - 2023 Davis4Health Community Health Improvement (CHIP) plan.

Methods:

- The Davis County Health Department worked in collaboration with Davis School District, Hope4Utah, and Hope Squad advisors to develop a simple survey using likert scales and open-ended questions.
- The survey was sent to all Davis County Hope Squad advisors through Davis School District and Hope4Utah. The majority of responses came from Davis School District Schools with a few responses from charter and alternative schools.
- It was completed on a voluntary basis with Hope Squad supplies offered to those who completed the survey.
- Surveys were completed in the spring of 2023 with 75 responses. 36 elementary school and 38 secondary school Hope Squad Advisors completed the survey.
- This report also includes data from the 2023 Hope Squad Student Survey completed by Hope4Utah.

Recommendations:

- More consistent entry of student encounters into the Hope Squad Data Collection Form on the Hope4Utah website will provide better data collection and influence prevention efforts.
- Hope Squads can function more effectively with additional funding to compensate advisors, provide education to the squad and student body, or to allow them to purchase activity supplies and/or shirts/buttons/lanyards for the Hope Squad members to be easily identified.
- Continue suicide prevention gatekeeper trainings (QPR, Youth Mental Health First Aid, Safe Messaging, etc.) for school staff, students, and parents.
- Offering class time during the school day will increase participation of students that cannot meet before or after school and decrease the extra time an advisor needs to stay at the school.
- Provide Hope Squad lessons for elementary aged students that are more engaging and interactive.
- Training all school staff on mental health and suicide prevention helps to keep it a priority.
- School-level and district support of Hope Squads helps prevent advisor burnout.
- Explore resources such as community partners, Davis Education Foundation, PTA, parent volunteers, etc. for additional funding and support.

Acknowledgements:

Hope4Utah and Davis School District

DAVIS COUNTY HOPE



S Q U A D

ASSESSMENT RESULTS

Includes information from a voluntary survey of HOPE Squad advisors and the Hope4Utah Student Survey in Davis County.

89%

Advisors believe that students and staff understand the role and purpose of the Hope Squads at their schools.

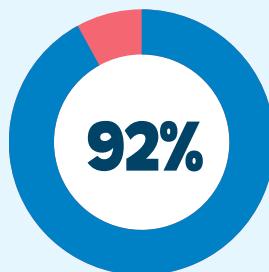
72%

Advisors report that they know where to access advisor and student training materials.

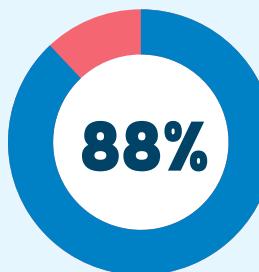
74%

of Hope Squads meet before or after school.

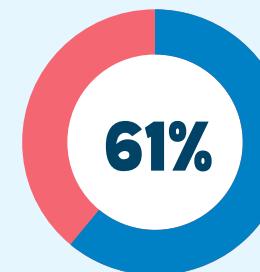
Of the Hope Squad advisors surveyed:



believe that Hope Squads are effective in their schools.

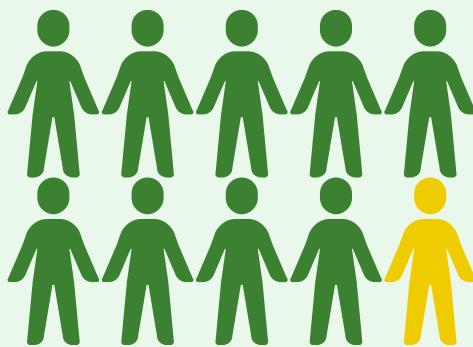


know how to access suicide prevention resources in the county.



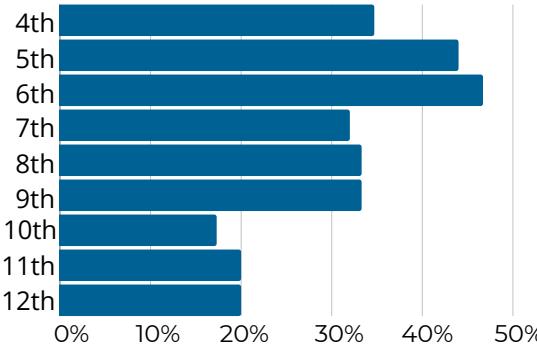
believe there is enough suicide prevention efforts happening at their schools.

93% of secondary Hope Squad members know what to do for a friend who is contemplating suicide.



93% of elementary Hope Squad members believe a counselor or other trusted adult at school can help students who are depressed.

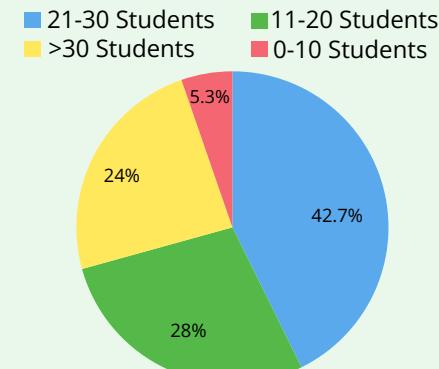
% of students represented from each grade in the Hope Squads



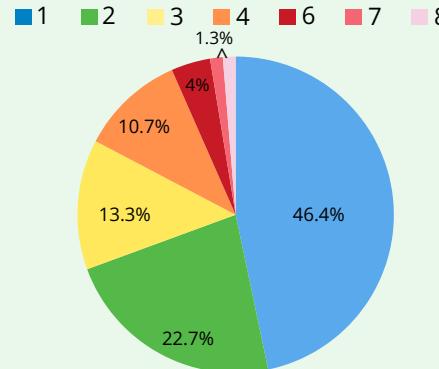
68%

of the advisors said that there is a demographic group not represented in their Hope Squad. The main barriers of including all demographics being the low amount of students in the school from those groups, and them either not being interested in Hope Squads or not being nominated.

Average size of Hope Squads



Average # of advisors per Squad



Success Stories:

"My students are reporting to a trusted adult when they see, hear, or think there is a problem or concern."

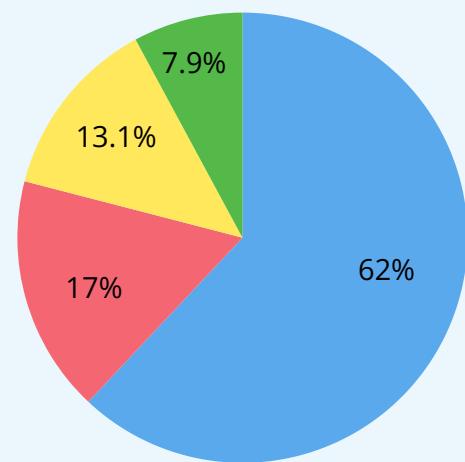
"We were able to purchase 6 books from each lesson and have the Hope Squad members go into every class at school and read the story for the month. Kids now know who the Hope Squad members are... and that they are a safe person at the school. It's opened doors for more discussion in the classroom and more kindness taking place at the school."

"We spend a lot of our Hope Squad time doing lunch activities and finding ways to help students meet each other and provide a safe environment for them to socialize and meet new people."

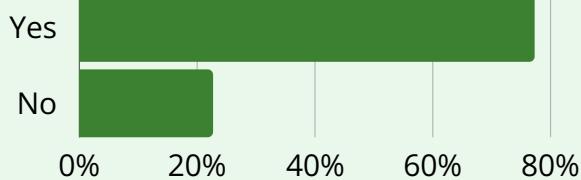
"Our Hope squad has created a culture of help seeking for the kids."

How students are recruited to Hope Squads

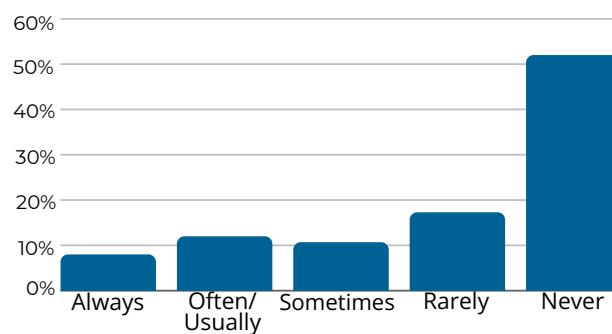
- █ Students are nominated by their peers to be a Hope Squad member
- █ Teacher or advisor appointed
- █ Students can sign up if they would like to participate (self-select)
- █ A mixture of all of the above



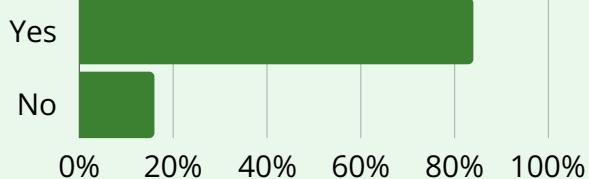
Do the students sign a Hope Squad contract or participation agreement?



All student encounters are entered into the Hope Squad Data Collection Form on the Hope4Utah website



Do students' parents sign a Hope Squad contract or participation agreement?



36% **56%**

of Hope Squads did not have funding for activities and supplies.

of Hope Squads who did have funding said it was not sufficient to cover their costs.

Of 400 Davis County Hope Squad members surveyed:



Agreed that they are willing to get help when they see a peer being bullied.



Agreed that they are willing to speak up when they see bullying.

Identified Barriers:

"Our advisors burn out pretty quickly. There is so much to do and it is usually just one person with no budget. The last one had a full class period for a semester and as a new teacher was excited to get involved but didn't have a good plan on how to keep students busy once the lessons were all covered. She ended up not wanting any future involvement. Empowering students and managing their behavior alone can be tough."

"The SWAG apparel is very important for representing the school and Hope Squad, so students will know who to go to for help. I was told we couldn't use the budget for that and I'm not sure how to get funding for it."

"It is extremely hard to run a Hope Squad in a rough title 1 school. There's basically no parental support and you and the other advisor have to do it all in a school day when you have so many other responsibilities (teaching, counseling). We don't get to do as much as other schools because of it."

"It would be helpful to encourage administrations to require Hope Squad to be a class rather than a club to ensure that it is used to its maximum efficacy."

"I just wish elementary schools had funding to support the program."

"It would be helpful to have more staff that make mental health/suicide prevention a priority - not just one or two spread so thin with other responsibilities."