

# The Significant Rise of Anxiety and Depression in Youth Post COVID – 19



Jessica Garcia | RUOP III | 2022 | UW School of Medicine

## Hypothesis

- Reduce anxiety and depression among youth in Lander, WY through organized outdoor-based camps

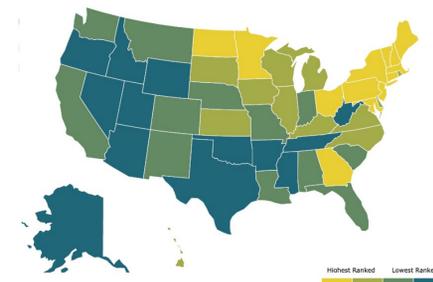
## Background

- Lander is located in central Wyoming near the Wind River Mountains
- 7,500 residents; predominate white race accounting for 92.4% of the population; the youth make up 24% of the entire Lander population
- COVID-19 stress from forced isolation, disrupted life and loss of social support in youth
- Increases in cortisol in youth can alter brain activity, leading to anxiety and depression
- Parents observed behavioral changes in their children during and post COVID-19
- Globally, anxiety and depressive symptoms in large youth cohorts were approximately 11.6% and 12.9% prior to COVID; Post covid rates 20.5% and 25.2%, respectively.

## Community Profile Assets

- Reach For Life formed in January 2022 to promote awareness and provide community training on mental health
  - Host training/educational events about available resources and how to take actions
  - Normalize mental health conversations
  - Sources of Strength – peer resource children group
- Other assets:
  - Mental Health Monday Awareness – Radio station

## Youth Ranking Across US



Lower rank – lower prevalence of mental illness/higher rates of access  
Higher rank – higher prevalence of mental illness/lower rates of access

## Literature Review

- 10-day summer camp
- Pre/post questionnaire forms measuring QoL and Anxiety
  - QoL subcategories: Improvement in self-esteem ( $p=0.035$ ) and emotional well-being ( $p=0.008$ )
  - Decrease in state anxiety ( $p=0.005$ ) and trait anxiety ( $p=0.034$ )
- Limitations
  - T1D Youth
  - Staffed with >25 professionals, including 10 physicians
  - Small sample size of 20 children



<https://www.fs.usda.gov/recarea/shoshone/recreation/campin-g-cabins/recarea/?recid=36361&actid=29>

## Conclusions

- Reach For Life to promote outdoor-based camp interventions to decrease anxiety and depression in youth
  - Accessibility to camp locations
  - Community organizations recent investment in youth mental health; parent investment
- Limitations
  - Affordability and volunteers
  - Time of year



**Project AWARE**



Volunteers from above Organizations part of Reach For Life