

# Cops or Counselors:

Are mental health services more effective than policing in NYC public schools?

## Background

As the topic of mental health becomes more popular nowadays, it is important that every educational institution provides access to mental health resources for its students. In contrast, there is a rising debate about whether police presence in public schools are necessary. Research has shown that when students are suspended or expelled, they are more likely to experience other negative outcomes such as being held back a grade, dropping out of school, and incarceration. In our project, we want to understand if mental health resources, or lack thereof, play a role in how students are disciplined at school.

## Why Does this Problem Matter?

The school to prison pipeline affects students in their foundational years of life and can ultimately lead to the demise of many minority students. To spend these formative years being treated as though you're a threat to society leads to devastating mental effects and doesn't allow one to grow to their true potential. It ultimately leads to minority students feeling like they're not deserving of an education and also deprives them of the resources they need to succeed. As a result, many minority students end up falling behind in school or completely dropping out.

## Data and Preprocessing

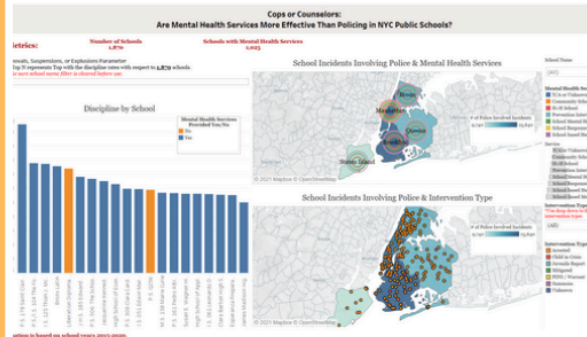
Target Datasets:

1. Annual Report on NYPD Contacts Student Discipline Report
2. NYC Police School Safety Reports
3. NYC School Based Health Centers

Packages Used for Data Cleaning and Processing: numpy, pandas, sklearn, scipy, matplotlib, seaborn, pingouin, folium.

## Data Insights

Our team used multiple government datasets from nycschools.gov to analyze suspensions, removals, and expulsions in NYC public schools.



Explanation of Dashboard:

**Discipline by School:** This bar chart shows the number of removals, suspensions, and expulsions per school. The color of the bar indicates whether a school has some type of mental health services, blue meaning "Yes" and orange meaning "No".

**School Incidents Involving Police & Mental Health Services:** This choropleth map shows the number of school incidents by New York borough, as well as highlights mental health services provided indicated by the colored circles. The darker the shaded area of blue on the map, the more incidents have occurred in that respective borough. Each mental health service is identified by a specific color on a map. The larger the circle/ring the more that respective mental health service is made available.

**School Incidents Involving Police & Intervention Type:** This choropleth map shows the number of school incidents by New York borough, as well as highlights the type of intervention as a result of each incident (identified as point on the map). The darker the shaded area of blue, the more incidents have occurred in that respective borough. Intervention type is identified by a specific color on a map. The points on the map help identify which interventions are more prevalent in a certain area.

## Results/Conclusion:

Based on our analysis, we found that mental health services in NYC Public Schools does not necessarily mean there are less suspensions and expulsions in schools. Even though many schools have mental health services, there is still a lot of force being used by school safety officers, whose job is to protect the children, not harm them. We found that especially in Brooklyn, there are many mental health resources available but still just as much force is used by school safety officers. When starting this project we thought that lack of mental health resources was the problem but if mental health resources isn't the problem, then what is?

## Additional Notes:

If we continued this project in the future, we could have dug into other circumstances to understand why so much police force is being used in NYC public schools. Is it income? Is there a lack of after school activities or outlets for kids at school? We would want to dig deeper to see if we could understand the problem more to figure out if there are ways to mitigate these constant issues of police force on children.

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