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# Mental Health in Aviation: A Study of Aviation Students on Their Perceptions of the Federal Aviation Administration's Rules Governing Mental Health

## Abstract

This study aims to understand collegiate aviation students, faculty, staff, and flight instructors' perceptions of the Federal Aviation Administration's (FAA) regulations governing mental health assistance.

## Background

College students face stressful challenges such as tuition bills, lower-paying jobs while in school, personal issues, time management, and many other trials. Aviation students, however, may have additional struggles related to increased tuition costs due to flying, weather, check ride stress, industry pressures, and displacement from family or a support system because specialty aviation schools are limited. National College Health Assessment (NCHA), through the responses of 33,204 students across the country, found that just over 70% of college students report moderate to serious psychological distress (American College Health Association, 2021). Lipson Et al. (2022), performed a 2013-2021 study of approximately 350,000 students at 373 campuses across the United States. This study found that in 2020-2021, just under 60% of students met criteria for one or more mental health problems.

## Hypothesis

students, faculty, staff, and flight instructors had a restrictive perception of the FAA rules regarding seeking mental health assistance, and that students, faculty, staff, and flight instructors had lower desire to seek out professional mental health assistance because of their perceptions.

## Methods

226 respondents completed the study in its entirety, rendering those the qualifying and usable responses.



## Conclusion

Through data points provided it was proven that the perception of the FAA's mental health regulations that the subjects hold has a negative effect on their desire to seek professional mental health assistance. Seeking mental health assistance does not directly prohibit a student from getting, or maintaining, an FAA medical. Counseling without a diagnosis or medication does not have to be reported on FAA medical Form 8500-8. A diagnosis of depression has a proven pathway for pilots to continue flying, though a diagnosis of anxiety warrants deferral to the FAA. **Changing the perception and culture surrounding aviation mental health is everyone's responsibility and may lead to improved safety and future prevention of mental health misconceptions.**

## Recommendations

1. The truth of what the regulations say be distributed to students through presentations, posters, and trustworthy sources.
2. On-campus resources be advertised to students to best facilitate seeking help if they so desire.

## References

- American College Health Association. American College Health Association-National College Health Assessment III: Reference Group Executive Summary Fall 2021. Silver Spring, MD: American College Health Association; 2022
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- Federal Aviation Administration. (2023). Guide for Aviation Medical Examiners. [https://www.faa.gov/ame\\_guide/media/ame\\_guide.pdf](https://www.faa.gov/ame_guide/media/ame_guide.pdf)
- Mental, 14 CFR § 67.107, 67.207, 67.307 (1996)
- Requirement for Certificates, Ratings, and Authorizations, 14 C.F.R. § 61.3 (2022)

Full Study Available

