

Sweden

The Student Health Team (Elev HälsoTeam - EHT) at a Swedish gymnasium plays a central role in promoting students' health, well-being, and also academic success. The team typically consists of a **school nurse**, (part time school doctor), **school counselor**, (part time school psychologist), a **Study and career counselor** and **special education teacher**, with the principal having overall responsibility. Their work is based on both preventive and intervention measures to create a safe and inclusive school environment.

The EHT works to identify and support students facing physical, psychological, social, or educational challenges. This may involve counseling with the school counselor or psychologist for mental health issues, adjustments in teaching through the special education teacher, or medical support from the school nurse and doctor. They collaborate with teachers, guardians, and external organizations such as social services and child and adolescent psychiatry (BUP) to provide students with the best possible support.

A key part of the team's work is prevention, including health discussions, student support projects, and promoting a positive school environment. They strive to reduce stress, promote mental well-being, and create a school where students feel seen and included. Through interdisciplinary collaboration, the student health team helps ensure that all students have the conditions they need to succeed in school and feel well.

At Brogymnasiet in Kristinehamn we have 2 fulltime, special education teachers, 2 fulltime study and career counselors, 2 school counselors and 1,5 school nurses.

School Nurse – Sara Lindeström

Education: 3 years as a Nurse at university and 1.5 years as a District Nurse.

What is your role in the school's life?

The School Nurse helps students with their goals based on medical issues. Sara has health talks and vaccinations, but when it comes to vaccinating, it is done in primary school, not in high school. The nurse ensures that all students have received their vaccinations.

How many young people come to you? How often?

Sometimes, Sara has a lot of students to meet with over several days, and sometimes the number of students she sees is fewer. It can vary from day to day, says Sara.

What kind of problems do you encounter most?

She mostly meets students who have pain somewhere or have a wound, or are concerned about something regarding their body. Otherwise, the nurse helps students contact healthcare services for those who don't know how to do so, such as contacting the health center.

Sometimes, she also meets students with mental health issues, such as difficulty sleeping and so on. Or students come to talk to Sara, and she needs to contact someone else in the school who can help the student, as she does not have the education to address mental health issues, for example, but she can talk to the counselor about mental health problems.

Are there specific types of students you see more often?

Sara says she meets some students more often than others. For example, some students come just to talk to her, while other students only see her for the health talks and never return to her office afterward.

Why do you think there is so much more use of counseling now?

She thinks it is an excellent way for students to reflect on their health. It is also easy to get help from the school. Additionally, it provides an opportunity to talk to someone and receive support, which is important for thinking through one's health and life throughout life.

What does a conversation or session look like with you?

It completely depends on what it's about and the purpose of the meeting. It is mainly up to the student. Sometimes, during health talks, there are questions the students have answered beforehand, which serve as a basis for the conversation.

When do you ask someone else for help (for a case)?

Sara says that if she needs advice or help, she always turns to the other school nurse, school counselor, or school doctor. Sometimes, it is also the case that she asks for help on behalf of the student. It is very common for her to ask to speak with the career counselor, school counselor, or even the special education teacher.

School Counselor - Therese

Education - Behavioral Science education, 3 years at university

What is your role in the school's life?

Therese answers that she is part of the school's student health team.

How many young people come to you? How often?

She mentions that it is hard to say, but some weeks she has many scheduled visits, others none, because students may not be at school due to absenteeism, which is a big concern. Also, at the beginning of the term, many students come for help with applications to CSN (Swedish student financial aid) and other matters, so it varies throughout the year.

What kind of problems do you encounter most?

Therese mentions that she mostly encounters students with high absenteeism. It is a big topic she discusses for various reasons. For example, many students experience anxiety, some come because they have fallen in love, some have experienced the death of someone, and so on. It can involve both big and small things. She meets students because they need advice.

Are there specific types of students you see more often?

She says she doesn't meet specific students, but it varies every day.

Why do you think there is so much more use of counseling now?

She believes that many are aware that help is available. It is more open now, and there is a lot of talk about mental health, with information everywhere on the internet. Many are encouraged to talk to someone, and in fact, a lot of people are doing it, which is very good.

What does a conversation or session look like with you?

It's about creating an open dialogue between the teacher and the students. By sitting across from each other, students can ask questions and get a chance to express their thoughts. For example, the teacher may ask questions such as: "Why are you asking that question?" or "What have you been thinking about?" It creates a dialogue where one can go back and forth.

Often, a student comes with a question, and the teacher can follow up with questions like: "What did you think then?" or "What will you do now?" It's important for the teacher to give advice tailored to the student's unique situation and problem. By actively listening and asking relevant questions, the teacher can help the student reflect and find their own solutions.

When do you ask someone else for help (for a case)?

Therese points out that it can often be a challenge within the school to provide sufficient support to students with severe anxiety or mental health issues. The school doesn't always have the resources to handle these situations on its own. Instead, they may need to refer students to the health center or first-line services for help.

When Therese sees that a student has more extensive needs than the school can offer, she helps them take the next step and seek specialist care, such as psychiatry. She supports the students in understanding that they may need more advanced treatment and that it's okay to ask for help. By acting as a link between the school and healthcare, she can help ensure that students get the help they truly need.

Special Education Teacher -Maria Karlsson

She is a Special Education Teacher and has completed education for grades 1-7 in Swedish, social studies, music, math, English, and art. She also studied the special education program in Örebro.

Her role involves supporting teachers and leading school development, but most importantly, ensuring that students receive the support they need. She acts as a voice for the students, making sure they feel that school works for them, that they are doing well, and that they reach their goals. She helps and supports students to ensure they graduate while also maintaining their well-being. She also assists with dyslexia assessments and other evaluations to make it easier for students to succeed in their courses. Sometimes, she works with students who have language disorders that make it difficult for them to express themselves. Dyscalculia assessments are also conducted.

She participates in parent-teacher meetings and speaks with students to support them in various pedagogical ways. The entire student health team works together! Sometimes, she refers students to other professionals to ensure they get the support they need. She is also involved in an concept where teachers can receive help in supporting students in different ways. Additionally, she collaborates with the school leadership to determine what the school needs—for example, creating awareness about language difficulties. Other aspects, such as seating arrangements in common areas, are also discussed.

Every week, students from grades 1-3 usually seek support. Some students come periodically when they struggle with courses or other school-related issues. She helps with dyslexia assessments and evaluations to make learning easier. Language disorders that make it difficult to express oneself are sometimes a concern, as well as dyscalculia assessments. She participates in parent-teacher meetings and talks to students to support them pedagogically. The student health team works together! She ensures students get the support they need.

Through "open EAT," teachers receive guidance on how to engage students in different ways. She also works with school leadership to assess the school's needs, such as fostering understanding for students with language difficulties. Other considerations include practical aspects like seating arrangements in school hallways.

Many students struggle with planning their studies and need help with study techniques. They lose motivation. Some students cannot keep up with lessons because they become overwhelmed. They need support, such as receiving lesson materials in advance. They also require study assistance during exams. She works a lot on improving collaboration between teachers and students. Exams should not be a speed competition. There are many different perspectives, and she works on reaching agreements that accommodate everyone.

Today's society is different—children are bombarded with images and stimuli from an early age. It is not as calm as it used to be. There is a lot that competes with school, such as mobile phones and other leisure activities. She believes that sometimes people are exposed to too many impressions, leaving little time for long-term learning. Everything is expected to happen very quickly! This creates challenges for those who need structure and more time. In the past, students read much more, which developed their language skills and made texts easier to understand. She feels that reading has been neglected.

At 15-16 years old, choosing a future path is difficult, which is why more vocational programs would be beneficial. School requires effort, so she believes that if students commit to school, they may not be able to do many other activities simultaneously. However, it is crucial that everyone feels well in school. It is extremely important to work on preventing and addressing mental health issues. There are many different factors at play, but no easy solution.

She also thinks that young children should not spend full days in school groups. They need more time with their parents, as was more common in the past. Parents should take more responsibility for their children, and parenting should be strengthened. However, she acknowledges that this is a political issue and not the school's responsibility.

The school staff and the student health team work together, but they also collaborate with external services such as the first-line mental health team, social services, or adult psychiatry if there are concerns about a student's situation. They may also have meetings with specialists, such as BUP (Child and Adolescent Psychiatry), if an eating disorder like anorexia is suspected.

Her primary job is to help students at the upper secondary level graduate and feel a sense of hope for the future. She wants them to feel that they are valuable and important.

Study and career counselor – Jessica Jönsson

Jessica has studied at Stockholm University for 3 years in the study and career counseling program.

Her job involves helping students with choices regarding high school, future studies, motivation for those who find school tough, and much more.

Every day, she meets students of all kinds. She encounters some more often than others, but every day, people come to her for advice. It also goes in periods, often at the start of the year for new students and at the end of the school year for final-year students.

Jessica helps with specializations, eligibility, career guidance, further studies, other alternatives, extra courses, how to apply, where one can get in, and everything related to future choices. Whether it involves studies or work.

She meets all kinds of people!

She believes it was harder to access information in the past, but now we get more help and have more options. It's harder to choose just one thing, but people work with different things throughout their lifetime. New jobs emerge while others disappear. New paths and methods arise.

The door is always open so you can meet her whenever you have time. Or, if she's busy, you can book an appointment. You can talk for as long as needed. The people who visit Jessica can ask questions and seek advice, or she may need to meet with a student if there is something important, for example, if she notices someone is struggling and might risk not graduating.

Jessica can seek advice from others in her work team. Sometimes from the principals, regarding decisions and how to proceed with a student. There are people she can consult with and can refer to a counselor if more help is needed.

Italy

School Psychologist in Italy - Silvia

In my school in Italy, the psychology service is a new opportunity from this year, and it will start in a few weeks.

The psychologist who will work in my school is called Silvia, and she has a Bachelor's degree in Cognitive and Psychobiological Psychology and a Master's degree in Neuroscience and Neuropsychological Rehabilitation.

She also holds a master's degree in Neuropsychology throughout life. She has always been passionate about the subject, so she attended 'Human Sciences' during high school.

She was assigned as a psychologist as part of a listening desk project.

The most frequent type of problem that the students talk with her are conflicts with the class. Many students come to her for help in understanding how to manage and resolve conflicts with classmates or teachers.

She said that there are various reasons why young people seek psychological help more frequently:

- Mental health is less a taboo thankfully. Teenagers themselves have more awareness of what mental health is. Schools and families are more sensitive to the subject and actively seek for support.
- The pandemic had a strong impact on students. Isolation, distance learning and uncertainty have increased anxiety, stress and relationship difficulties.
- More and more children suffer from anxiety disorders, depression and stress related to school, social and family pressures. Above all, the school system in Italy often imposes stressful rhythms and high expectations, leading many students to experience burnout at an early age.
- The use of social media has amplified social comparison, performance anxiety and cyberbullying, creating new psychological challenges for students.

As a psychologist she is committed to professional secrecy. However, she sometimes ask for help for some particularly difficult cases, while maintaining the anonymity of the person. It happens to her, for example, when the case is particularly serious and she has to refer the

student to centres or support organisations outside the school. It also happens to ask for help when the student is not able to relate to her at all and she tries other strategies to engage with him/her.