

---

**Karen Thornton**  
*School Communications Specialist*

## **NSPRA Excellence in Writing Entry: Bilingual Social Worker Educates on Mental Health Issues, by Karen Thornton**

Anxiety and depression among adolescents have increased substantially since the COVID-19 epidemic. The article “Bilingual Social Worker Educates on Mental Health Issues” focuses on the importance of ensuring students know that they have options when facing these issues. Bilingual Social Worker Estefany Vargas is working hard to make sure students know that there is no shame in asking for help. This article helps bring to light for students and parents the fact that we have resources for them at our Career and Technical Education Center. It also helps them know that they are not alone—many students are suffering. This article came out at the height of the pandemic, when it was particularly important for students who felt isolated.

It is in the Tech Talk Online e-newsletter: <https://conta.cc/35cGWHw>

**Karen Thornton**  
*School Communications Specialist*



November 2020

## #Tech2DayCareer2Morrow

### DID YOU KNOW?

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, depression and anxiety have increased in adolescents since the COVID-19 pandemic. So it is critical that students have access to—and feel comfortable seeking—professional help.

### Bilingual Social Worker Educates on Mental Health Issues

Estefany Vargas' main goal is to normalize mental health needs for as many students as possible. The new bilingual social worker at the Career and Technical Education (CTE) Center at PNW BOCES said that education is key to normalizing mental health and promoting awareness.



"Mental health is often overlooked due to stigma, limited resources, or lack of awareness and understanding," Vargas said. "I believe educating students about mental health and normalizing these conversations is by and large the most effective way to eradicate the stigma and to ensure those in need receive the appropriate supports."

Globally, depression is one of the leading causes of illness and disability among adolescents, according to the World Health Organization. And according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), depression and anxiety have increased substantially in adolescents since the COVID-19 pandemic. So it is critical that students have access to—and feel comfortable seeking—professional help.

Vargas, who lives in New York City, said she is excited to work at CTE because every day provides an opportunity to meet and support different students. Before joining CTE, she worked as a social worker in a foster care agency in the Bronx, where she supported children and youth by providing care management and clinical services to address mental health needs.

"I believe we set students up for success when we provide each and every one with the skills and knowledge to develop multiple options and opportunities for success," she said. "CTE presents students with the skills they need to create their own path toward prosperity."