

# Student Quickly Connected to Emergency Psychological Services Through Closegap Wellness Check-in

Although Marla\* was struggling academically, the reserved student who mostly kept to herself wasn't on anybody's radar as someone who had a high need for additional emotional support. Not all students feel comfortable speaking out and asking for help and not all students feel emboldened to walk down the hall and knock on the school counselor's door. Marla is the perfect example of how even if somebody doesn't reach out for help it doesn't mean they don't want it.

## **"I don't know if she would have reached out to someone had Closegap not been available"**

When Marla made the transition into sixth grade, her school was in the reopening phase after the coronavirus pandemic and had newly implemented Closegap as an emotional wellness check-in platform. Prior to introducing Closegap, students had to individually seek out the guidance counselor if they wanted extra support. Despite their best efforts, with 370 students in the school it was unrealistic to presume the school counselor would have the time to check in individually with everybody. As it turned out, the same cluster of students were often seen lingering outside the counselor's office while others had never stepped foot inside. Marla was one of them.

The Closegap platform offered Marla a new and direct line to school staff to express her emotional needs. Marla's school counselor quickly saw she indicated she was feeling sad, having peer issues, and would like to speak to an adult. Following up with the sixth grader, the school counselor became aware of stressors in the student's life that no one was aware of at the time. "I don't know if she would have reached out to someone had Closegap not been available," Marla's school psychologist said. "She is a quiet kid. The quieter they are, the more there is a tendency to not ask questions, to not assume something like this is happening."

A fuller picture of Marla's situation started to come together. Not only was Marla currently not living with her parents, a risk factor on its own, but she also had emerging sexual identity questions she was worried her new guardians wouldn't understand. She had been struggling since second or third grade, she expressed, often thinking about self-harm and suicide. Considering Marla disclosed self-harm behavior and suicidal ideation as early as that week, the school psychologist was quickly brought into the room to conduct a more formal and comprehensive risk assessment. Marla was eventually accompanied to the psychiatric emergency room where she agreed to start weekly outpatient therapy and has been seeing a therapist ever since.

## **"This is the perfect example of why something like this needs to be implemented"**

Reflecting on Marla's story, her school psychologist remembers how identifying Marla's need for help happened very quickly after implementing Closegap. "This is the perfect example of why something like this needs to be implemented," she shared. "Especially to teachers who may not understand the importance, or who may get annoyed that we're asking them to do one more thing. It's just a check-in. It's just letting them click a few boxes. If you could save one kid's life, you would do that."

*\*Student name and all identifying information, including school district and school psychologist, has been changed or omitted to protect the privacy of the student.*