

Design Proposal Template:

School: Mendota High School State: California

Division: ~~Middle School~~ **High School**

Team Members' Names: Christopher Torres-Alfaro & Jonathan Alfaro Saravia

Project Title: Should be creative and give readers a general sense of what the project is about and want to read more. (20 word maximum)

Safe Space: A multilingual; crisis-response system for anonymous, real-time mental health intervention in our underserved School and Community of Mendota.
(20 words)

Community Challenge Being Addressed: Describe the community challenge that you will attempt to address with your proposed solution. (75 word maximum)

Mendota High School students face a rising mental health crisis, including a **63.6% increase in suicidal ideation within one semester**. Students in our rural Central Valley community have to endure limited mental health access, high counselor caseloads, cultural stigma, and language barriers. These leading factors prevent timely help-seeking during emotional crises. As a result, many students experience delayed or no intervention during critical moments, increasing isolation and risk while existing support systems remain underutilized.

(75 words)

Community Research and User Identification: Explain the process used to identify the community challenge and select your user. Include any research done to identify issues in your community and understand which groups face challenges because of these issues. (150 word maximum)

We collaborated with Mendota High School's National Alliance on Mental Illness club to evaluate mental health needs through anonymous surveys. Initial research found **55%** of students reporting persistent hopelessness and **41%** reporting suicidal ideation. We then distributed flyers across campus, collecting over **506+ responses**. In this dataset, **65%** reported thoughts of not wanting to be alive, and **44%** experienced periods where they felt unable to continue.

We expanded our research into our community, yielding over **1,104+ responses**. Within this expanded dataset, **44%** reported times they wanted to give up, and **39%** reported suicidal ideation. Additionally, **67%** reported not using mental health apps, revealing an engagement gap. These findings led us to select students experiencing emotional distress who avoid traditional support as primary users. Findings were **validated** with our School Psychologist (Ms. Whittaker), Principal (Mr. Kirby), Superintendent (Dr. Lopez), MHS NAMI advisor (Mrs. Covarrubias), students, and our School Resource Officer.

(150 words)

User Profile: Provide a detailed description of your selected user. Include information about challenges they face, how those challenges impact their lives, and specific project needs based on user feedback. (150 word maximum)

Our primary user is a high school student experiencing anxiety, depression, or suicidal ideation who **avoids school-based support** due to the fear of judgement, confidentiality concerns, cultural, public, and self-stigma over mental health, and language barriers. During emotional distress, they often suppress emotions and rely on private digital spaces instead of reaching out to counselors, trusted adults, family, or peers. As **emotional challenges intensify, these barriers** can create isolation, reduce academic engagement, strain relationships, and delay access to critical support. Many also lack access to consistent external mental health services, making crises more difficult to manage in real-time.

Research and user feedback revealed a need for anonymous, multilingual, and accessible support that enables immediate intervention without requiring direct disclosure, along with trusted crisis resources, emotional stabilization tools, and guidance that also supports the adults and community members involved in providing help during emergencies; pioneering our ultimate message: ***“You’re Not Alone.”***
(150 words)

Project Goals: List your project goals and explain how these goals will address the community challenge. Project goals should define the desired outcomes, not specific features of the proposed solution. (150 word maximum)

Safe Space aims to reduce the severity and frequency of student mental health crises by improving how quickly and effectively support is accessed, delivered, and sustained across school and community environments, making it easier for users to seek help when they need it most.

Crisis Intervention Timing:

- Reduce delay between emotional escalation and access to support.
- Improve stabilization during high-risk emotional states before crises intensify into emergencies.

Help-Seeking Activation:

- Increase help-seeking behaviors among students who avoid traditional support systems.
- Mitigate barriers caused by stigma, confidentiality concerns, language differences and fear of judgment.

Emotional Stabilization:

- Cultivate students’ ability to regulate distress during acute mental health episodes.
- Reinforce coping strategies that promote resilience and reduce recurrence of crisis-level emotional states.

Equitable Access:

- Amplify access to support for students facing language barriers and limited mental health resources.
- Expand awareness and utilization of school, community, and crisis-support services among students, families, and trusted adults.

(150 words)

Proposed Solution: Describe your proposed solution, including any innovative and unique features, and explain how this solution will address your users' needs and the challenges they face. (150 word maximum)

Safe Space is a multilingual crisis-response system designed to identify, respond to, and stabilize student emotional distress in real-time across underserved school and community environments. Developed from Mendota student and community research; it addresses barriers such as stigma, language access, limited counseling capacity, and low engagement with resources.

Real-Time Crisis Response Layer:

- Provides immediate call, text, and chat-based crisis lifelines and connects users to appropriate local and national support services. Cross-platform access across phones, tablets, and computers; ensuring support even when device use is restricted, addressing school and home limitations.

SafeAI Adaptive Intervention Engine:

- Responds to emotional escalation by detecting distress patterns and generating personalized, step-based safety plans during crises.

Emotional Stabilization Systems:

- Meets immediate user needs through grounding, breathing exercises, journaling, communities, and calming audio tools, supporting emotional regulation during crises.

Behavioral Continuity Systems:

- Addresses long-term challenges by reinforcing healthy routines that build resilience and reduce recurring crisis episodes.

(150 words)

Initial Design: A single graphic of your first design idea with key features adequately labeled. It should be easy to understand, and the reader should have a general understanding of how the prototype functions by looking at the graphic. Max size 8.5" x 11". May contain up to 4 views of the design.

