

Panhandle  PBS

Mental Health Toolkit For

FPC

Featuring the
NAMI/JED College
Mental Health Guide

Panhandle Partnerships Mental Health Clinic

Serving Frank Phillips College, Clarendon College,
Amarillo College, and West Texas A&M University
students at no cost



- Individual Counseling
- Group Counseling
- Connection with resources
- Evening and Weekend Appointments
- In-Person & Telehealth Services Provided

Please Call 911 for Emergencies
For Immediate crisis support
Call 988 or Text
741741



**FRANK PHILLIPS
COLLEGE**



Amarillo College®

Email for more information Panhandlepartnerships@gmail.com

Mental Health Resources for Borger Area

Local Resources:

TPCB (free)
806-274-2297
412 N. Main St
Borger, TX 79007

Twelve Roots Therapy
806-395-5185
709 Deahl St
Borger, TX 79007

Tillarie Sisneros
806-203-5795
100 N. McGee, Suite 42
Borger, TX 79007

On Campus:
Becky Green, M.Ed.
806-457-4277
bgreen@fpctx.edu
FPC Counselor
Library Building, L5
Borger, TX 79007

Mental Health Resources for Amarillo Area

1. Mental Health Resources During A Crisis (or for anyone who is suicidal)
Texas Panhandle Centers (TPC) Crisis Hotline: 806-359-6699 or 1-800-692-4039 (toll-free) • Ask for the Mobile Crisis Outreach Team (MCOT) which consist of TPC counselors and Crisis Intervention-Trained (CIT) Police Officers
Amarillo Police Department Crisis Intervention Team (CIT): Call 9-1-1 and ask for a CIT Police Officer
Family Support Services 24/7 Crisis Hotline: 806-374-5433 or 844-363-3452 (toll-free)
NWTHS Behavioral Health Hospital (aka The Pavilion): 806-354-1810 or 1-800-537-2585 (toll-free)

2. Short-Term, Non-Life-Threatening Mental Health Residential Care
Texas Panhandle Centers (TPC) Respite Center: 806-351-3270 • 2002 Hardy St (off Wolflin Ave), Amarillo, TX 79106

3. Jail Diversion to Mental Health Services When Arrested/Jailed
Maira Argomaniz: 806-468-5816 • Maira.Argomaniz@txpan.org

4. Mental Health Screening and Psychiatric/Case-worker Services
Texas Panhandle Centers (TPC): 806-337-1000 • 1501 S Polk St, Amarillo, TX 79101

5. Affordable Counseling (sliding scale fee)
Family Support Services: 806-342-2500 • 7136 I-40 Frontage Rd, Park West Bldg. B, Amarillo, TX 79106

6. Free Medical Clinic (including dental and mental health)
Heal the City: 806-231-0364 • 609 S Carolina St, Amarillo, TX 79106
Regence Health Network: 806-374-7341 • 3113 Ross St, Amarillo TX 79118
Northwest J.O. Wyatt Clinic: 806-351-7200 • 1411 E Amarillo Blvd, Amarillo 79118

7. Alcohol and Drug Abuse Help/Support
Cenikor: Local Inpatient and Outpatient Rehab Facility • 806-350-2723 or 1-888-236-4567 • 1001 Wallace Blvd, Amarillo, 79106
Local Alcoholic Anonymous (AA) Meetings: Go to <http://nwta66.org> for meeting list • 24hr help line: 806-373-4600
My Next Step: Intensive Outpatient Substance Abuse • 806-452-8006 • 6500 Canyon Dr, Ste 200, Amarillo, TX 79109
Faith City Mission: 806-373-6402 • 401 SE 2nd Ave, Amarillo, TX 79101
West Texas Counseling and Rehab (Methadone Clinic): 806-373-0062 • 2300 Line Ave, Amarillo, TX 79106

8. Free Legal Help
Legal Aid of Northwest Texas: Amarillo Petroleum Building • 806-373-4309 • 203 SW 8th Ave, Ste 600, Amarillo, TX 79101

9. Free Mental Health or Social Support Services for AISD students (at school or in your home)
Student and Family Advocates: 806-326-2057

ONLINE, TELETHERAPY, AND MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCES WITH OPTIONS FOR LOW INCOME CLIENTS

****Disclaimer:** This is not to be construed as medical or legal advice. This is an evolving list of resources for mental health care and should not be taken as an endorsement. If you need a referral please speak to your doctor. If this is urgent or life-threatening, please call 911.

Text and Helplines:

CRISIS TEXTLINE

<https://www.crisistextline.org/>

Text HOME to 741741 to connect with a Crisis Counselor

NAMI HELPLINE AND TEXTLINE

<https://www.nami.org/>

Helpline: 800-950-6264

Text NAMI TO 741741

NATIONAL SUICIDE PREVENTION LIFELINE

<https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/>

Call 800-273-8255

TEEN LINE (TEEN TO TEEN PEER SUPPORT)

<https://teenlineonline.org/>

Call 310-855-4673 or text TEEN to 839863

TRANSLIFELINE

<https://www.translifeline.org/>

Call 877-565-8860

THE TREVOR PROJECT (LGBTQ + YOUTH SUICIDE PREVENTION & CRISIS INTERVENTION)

<https://www.thetrevorproject.org/get-help-now/>

Call 1-866-488-7386 or text START to 678678

What to know when reaching out to therapists & tips:

- Expect to have to make a lot of phone calls, fill out a lot of forms, and answer a lot of personal questions in ways that may not always seem very personal. Intake can be the hardest part of reaching out and finding a therapist that works for you, but it is worth it!!

- Do not be discouraged if you call and speak to several providers who either do not have room for new clients, or do not have space for a new sliding scale client. You may also leave voicemails for therapists that go unanswered. This can be a numbers game, but taking this step can be a crucial part of making sure you find a therapist who is right for you.

- If you decide to start working with a therapist and it does not feel like the right fit to you for any reason, it is okay to start again and keep looking.

Online Resources for Addiction Support:

Many 12 step programs are offering digital meeting options.

ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS

<http://aa-intergroup.org/directory.php>

NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS

https://www.na.org/?ID=virtual_meetings

GAMBLERS ANONYMOUS

<http://www.gamblersanonymous.org/ga/node/1>

OVEREATERS ANONYMOUS

<https://oa.org/find-a-meeting/?type=1>

SEX AND LOVE ADDICTS ANONYMOUS

<https://slaafws.org/meetings>

The Little Things

What if you had free, trustworthy videos you could use to open up conversations about mental health in the workplace without having to buy them or produce them yourselves?

You do.

Panhandle PBS asked local and national mental health experts for their advice and the science behind it. The resulting series, “The Little Things” teaches simple practices that can help people build resilience. The show was produced in partnership with Panhandle Behavioral Health Alliance and Texas Panhandle Centers for Behavioral and Development Health, and supported by other health and business entities and community nonprofits.

All content of the eight-episode series is available on the Panhandle PBS website and YouTube channel. It is posted both by episode and by individual segments of 1 to 4 minutes — short enough for a staff meeting or email. The segments make the content even more approachable.



Scan to find “The Little Things” episodes and a playlist of segments.

Quick tips from Panhandle PBS

**“There is no health without mental health.”
— World Health Organization**

Adopting regular practices, such as meditation or listing things for which you're grateful can rewire your brain, creating strong, resilient neural pathways that are reinforced with repetition.

Mindfulness

Stressed? Try box breathing. Inhale for a count of four, hold your breath for four, exhale for four, and hold that for four. Repeat until you are more calm physically and emotionally.

Exercise

According to the National Institutes of Health, 30 minutes of exercise of moderate intensity, such as brisk walking, for three days a week, is sufficient to gain mental health benefits.

Food and mood

The gut is often called the second brain. The messages it sends to your mind will be healthier if you eat healthier. Stock your pantry with fruits and vegetables, lean proteins, nuts and other brain foods.

Creativity

Having trouble regulating your emotions? Doing something creative can unlock inner resources for dealing with stress, solving problems and enjoying life. There are so many options! Drawing, knitting, cooking, music, journaling...

Nature

Studies show spending time in green space or bringing nature into your everyday life can contribute to relaxation, improve mood and reduce stress.

Connection

Research indicates people who feel more connected to others have lower levels of anxiety and depression. Reach out to a friend, join a club, take a class, or volunteer.



STARTING THE CONVERSATION

College and
Your Mental Health





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ABOUT NAMI

NAMI, the National Alliance on Mental Illness, is the nation's largest grassroots mental health organization dedicated to building better lives for the millions of Americans affected by mental illness.

What started as a small group of families gathered around a kitchen table in 1979 has blossomed into the nation's leading voice on mental health. Today, we are an association of thousands of state organizations, local affiliates and volunteers who raise awareness and provide advocacy, education and support in communities across the United States.

ABOUT THE JED FOUNDATION

JED is a national nonprofit that exists to protect emotional health and prevent suicide for our nation's teens and young adults. We're partnering with high schools and colleges to strengthen their mental health, substance abuse and suicide prevention programming and systems. We're equipping teens and young adults with the skills and knowledge to help themselves, and each other. We're encouraging community awareness, understanding and action for young adult mental health.

FACEBOOK: NAMI

TWITTER: NAMICommunicate

INSTAGRAM: NAMICommunicate

TUMBLR: notalone.nami.org ■ ok2talk.org

FACEBOOK: jedfoundation

TWITTER: jedfoundation

INSTAGRAM: jedfoundation

YOUTUBE: jedfoundation

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A NOTE TO READERS...

TO STUDENTS: This guide is written to provide you with important information about mental health during the college years. We encourage you to read this guide, learn from it and use it to start and continue a conversation about mental health.

TO PARENTS: This guide is for you, too.¹ It's important to know more about mental health during the college years and proactive steps that can help you support your student if needed.

¹ The term "parents" is used throughout the guide to include caregivers, family members and other important and trusted adults involved in the lives of college students.

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NAMI and JED thank the college students and parents who contributed their ideas and expertise to this guide. Their input helped us to effectively communicate the importance of college students and families learning more about mental health, holding conversations and better understanding health information privacy laws and rules. NAMI would especially like to thank Elizabeth Bryan and Robert Marko-Franks, college students and summer interns, for their valuable contributions to the report. NAMI appreciates the legal expertise and guidance on HIPAA and FERPA shared by Adam H. Greene, a partner with the law firm of Davis Wright Tremaine, and Anna Watterson a lawyer formerly with the firm. We also appreciate the contributions of Nancy Wolf and Margaret Go, parents who shared their personal experience and expertise on this topic.

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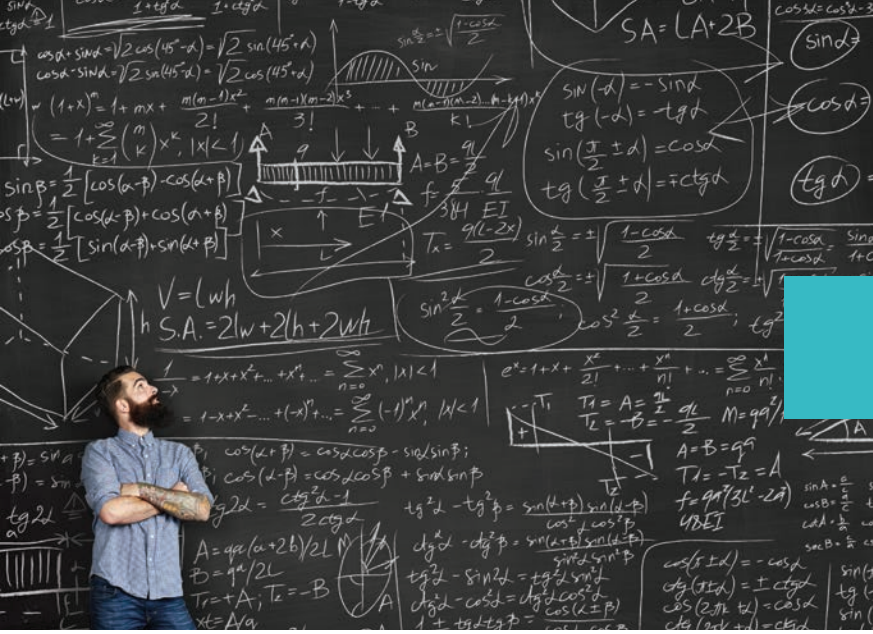
WHY START A CONVERSATION ABOUT MENTAL HEALTH?

Attending college is an important achievement and exciting time in life. You will gain greater independence, meet new people and have new and memorable experiences. It is a time of significant transition, which can be both positive and challenging. For some, the stress of college may impact mental health, making it difficult to manage the daily demands of school. In fact, did you know as many as one in five students experiences a mental health condition while in college?

To help put a thoughtful plan into place should a mental health condition arise, NAMI (the National Alliance on Mental Illness) and JED have created this guide to help *start the conversation*. It offers both parents and students the opportunity to learn more about mental health, including what the privacy laws are and how mental health information can be shared.

Conversations allow you to plan for the unexpected; to know what to do if you develop emotional distress, a mental health condition or if an existing condition worsens. Talking about mental health is important even if you don't experience a mental health condition because a friend may need help. Students often prefer to confide in a friend before confiding in anyone else—or you may notice that a peer is struggling and you may be able to assist. By learning more, you'll be better equipped to know what to do if you or a friend is in distress.





STRESSORS THAT MAY AFFECT MENTAL HEALTH

- Relationship breakups
- Academic pressures
- Poor grades
- Financial stress
- Social status pressures
- Feeling alone or homesick
- Feeling marginalized, misunderstood or like you don't fit in
- Concern or worry about your family members at home
- Loss of day-to-day family or community support
- Drug and alcohol use
- Inadequate sleep
- Feeling overwhelmed
- Grief
- Gender and sexuality questioning
- Friendship challenges
- Sports team losses
- Unmet expectations

NAVIGATING COLLEGE

College life is full of opportunities for personal growth, greater independence and exploration of new social and academic experiences. New experiences make college an exciting time, but one that may also be stressful. Stress may come from keeping up with academic demands, forging new relationships and managing greater independence. Changes in stress levels, along with new sleep patterns and eating habits, can have a big impact on your health.



BUILDING CONNECTIONS

Also, many students face insecurity, loneliness or disappointment during college. Others may experience bouts of depression, anxiety or the start of other mental health conditions. While strong feelings are common, we want you to know what to do if you feel too overwhelmed, if you begin to experience mental distress or if an existing condition worsens.

Connections with others, including involvement with campus and community activities, can help you protect your mental health. Explore opportunities through your campus student activities center and get involved in one or more of the following:

- Campus events
- Campus clubs
- Campus interest groups
- Sports
- Student organizations
- Volunteer activities



MANAGING STRESS

- Create to-do lists and tackle items one by one
- Exercise
- Get enough sleep
- Explore time-management strategies
- Ask friends how they manage stress
- Listen to relaxing music
- Set aside time for self-care
- Practice mindful meditation or prayer
- Eat healthy foods
- Avoid alcohol, drugs, smoking and caffeine
- Seek support from family, friends or peers
- Talk with your resident advisor, a trusted adult or the campus counseling or guidance center

WHO TO INCLUDE IN YOUR CONVERSATION

We recommend starting a conversation with your parents about mental health. If your support network includes trusted adults who are not family members, that's OK; have your conversation with trusted adults who will provide support if you need it.

STARTING YOUR CONVERSATION

The following four topics are important to discuss as part of your family conversation about mental health. We encourage you to review the information in this guide about each of these topics and share it within your family as part of your conversation.

1. Mental health conditions are common
2. Common signs of a mental health condition
3. Mental health care on campus
4. Health information privacy laws and rules



MENTAL HEALTH CONDITIONS ARE COMMON

- 1 in 5 youth and young adults experiences a mental health condition²
- 75% of all lifetime mental health conditions begin by age 24³
- 30% of college students reported feeling so down at some point during the previous year that they found it difficult to function⁴

Experiencing emotional distress or developing a mental health condition while in college can be lonely and frightening, but it doesn't have to be. Feelings of anxiety, depression and mental health conditions are common, and recovery is possible. Building connections to others and having a strong network of support can help—and so can talking. The more you talk about mental health, the easier taking care of your health and well-being will be.

² National Institute of Mental Health. Accessed on the web at <http://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/statistics/prevalence/any-mental-illness-ami-among-us-adults.shtml>

³ National Institute of Mental Health. *Mental Illness Exact Heavy Toll, Beginning in Youth*. June 6, 2005. Accessed on the web at <http://www.nimh.nih.gov/news/science-news/2005/mental-illness-exacts-heavy-toll-beginning-in-youth.shtml>.

⁴ American College Health Association. *American College Health Association National College Health Assessment II*. Spring 2014. Linthicum, MD: American College Health Association; 2014.

CONVERSATION STARTERS

Conversation starters for students:

- My school shared this guide about mental health. Can we sit down and talk about it?
- This guide has helpful information about handling stress and information schools can and cannot share with families. I'd like us to review it together.

Conversation starters for parents:

- I know you're excited about starting school next month, and I'm excited for you too. Before school starts, I'd like to talk with you about some common struggles that might arise. This guide has helpful information.
- (If relevant) We have a family history of mental illness or substance abuse, so I'd like to talk with you about mental health. This guide has information that can help you be proactive about your overall physical and mental health.

TIP: Don't let the conversation stop there. Keep it going and check in periodically throughout the school year.



COMMON SIGNS OF A MENTAL HEALTH CONDITION

Mental health conditions have 10 common warning signs that should be taken seriously. If you or someone you know experiences one or more of these signs, you should talk with trusted family, peers or mentors and seek assistance.

1. Feeling very sad or withdrawn for more than two weeks
2. Severe, out-of-control risk-taking behaviors
3. Sudden overwhelming fear for no reason
4. Not eating, throwing up or using laxatives to lose weight
5. Seeing, hearing or believing things that are not real
6. Repeatedly and excessively using drugs or alcohol
7. Drastic changes in mood, behavior, personality or sleeping habits
8. Extreme difficulty in concentrating or staying still
9. Intense worries or fears that get in the way of daily activities
10. Trying to harm oneself or planning to do so

It can be difficult to know whether what you are experiencing is an early sign of an emerging mental health condition or part of adjusting to college. You don't have to know the answer to this question. Listen to your mind and body. If you are not feeling right and are having trouble shaking that feeling, then talk with someone who can help you sort things out and help you decide what kind of support or care you need.

CAMPUS RESOURCES FOR MENTAL HEALTH

Talk with your parents or a trusted adult about what to do if you are worried about your mental health—ideally, before you leave for college. Here are some issues to consider:

- Whom will you talk to?
- How can your parents or other trusted adults be most supportive?
- How much and what information would you want shared with your parents or trusted adults about your situation?
- What works best for you in sharing and conveying information?

Think through your preferences and create a simple plan if you begin to experience emotional distress or if you suspect you might have a mental health condition.

Be sure to discuss any family history of mental illness; mental health conditions often run in families. If a family history is present, know the warning signs, pay close attention to your mental health and

- Call the campus counseling or health center
- Request a confidential conversation with your resident advisor if you are in a campus residence hall
- Talk with the dean of student affairs, peer support specialist or campus chaplain
- Request a confidential conversation with your academic advisor or a faculty member
- Contact the leader of a campus mental health organization, such as NAMI on Campus or Active Minds

TIP: Not all conversations can be kept confidential, especially if you share information about self-harm or harming others. In general, the most confidential place on campus is the counseling or mental health center. They can share information about you only with your agreement—unless they feel you might be an immediate danger to yourself or others. Other offices might discuss your situation and concerns with other professionals on campus or perhaps your parents—but only if they are directly concerned about your safety or risk to others.

ALCOHOL AND DRUG USE

Avoid alcohol and drug use to cope with stress and if you are experiencing the warning signs of a mental health condition. Alcohol and drug use can worsen an underlying mental health condition. Drug use, especially marijuana and hallucinogens, may increase the likelihood of psychosis in people who are at risk of developing a serious mental illness.

seek help when needed. And if you currently use mental health services, talk about how you'll continue your mental health care on campus, how you and your family will recognize new or increased symptoms and what you will do if such a situation arises.

Also discuss strategies for managing stress during college because high levels of stress increase the risk of developing a mental health condition. Talk about what you will do and who you will reach out to if you experience a high level of stress or find it difficult to manage stress.

Keep the conversation going throughout the school year because your mental health and stress levels can change. Some students report not confiding in parents about declining mental health to avoid worrying their family, especially when they are far from home. However, communicating with your parents or a trusted adult can help you get needed support.



SUICIDE HELP AND RESOURCES

If you find yourself struggling, seek help. The sooner you get help, the better. Don't take on the burden of what you are experiencing alone; reach out so others can support you. Reaching out is a sign of strength. We all have challenging times in life when we need to lean on family, friends and professionals for support. You are not alone.

Suicidal behavior is also a risk for college students, especially when mental health conditions are undetected and untreated. Suicide—although rare—is the second leading cause of death among youth and young adults ages 15 to 25. Suicide can be a difficult topic, but talking more about mental health and seeking care and support when needed can help keep you safe.

If you or someone you know is experiencing suicidal thoughts and feels like life is not worth living, seek help **immediately** by calling the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 800-273-TALK (8255), by texting Crisis Text Line at 741741 or by calling 911. Involve others; connect with family, a resident advisor, a counselor, a trusted friend or another trusted adult.



IF YOU ARE A PARENT OR TRUSTED ADULT WHO SUSPECTS A STUDENT IS STRUGGLING

Even if you are not experiencing difficulty, you could be in a position to help a friend or peer who experiences emotional distress or develops a mental health condition during college. Know the signs and the mental health resources on your campus. Don't be afraid to say something. You do not increase the risk of suicide by talking about it with a friend you are worried about. By speaking up and letting someone know you care, you may help him or her get the help they need.

REACH OUT. Let him or her know you are concerned.

CONTACT COLLEGE STAFF. If your student is unresponsive or you think the issue could be serious, contact a campus mental health professional, the dean of students or another staff member.

SHARE INFORMATION. A campus mental health professional may not be able to provide health care information, but they can listen to your concerns or health information about your student.

KEEP TALKING. Help start—and continue—a dialogue about mental health.



MENTAL HEALTH CARE ON CAMPUS

Whether you currently use mental health services, begin to experience distress or develop a mental health condition or never need mental health care, you should know how to access mental health care on campus.

Many people with mental health conditions attend and are finding success in college and many colleges are working to accommodate and support students with mental health needs. Most—but not all—colleges have a counseling center or health clinic on campus. A counseling center or health clinic can help by talking with you or by linking you to other campus or community-based resources.

Here are things to check out online or in-person before or soon after you arrive on campus:

- Where are mental health services provided?
- How do you make an appointment for mental health care?
- Are drop-in services available?
- How do you access mental health services after hours or in an emergency?
- What mental health services and programs are available?
- Are there any fees for mental health services and supports?
- Are there limits on the type or amount of services available and if so, will your school link you with care in the community?



OFFICE FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

If you do not find information about mental health care on campus or your college does not offer mental health services, contact your school's health center if one exists or the disability services office for assistance. Your school may partner with a community mental health center where they will refer you. You may also seek guidance on resources from your academic advisor.

Once you have explored mental health services that are available, put mental health center and emergency service contacts into your phone.

In addition to mental health services, your college may have additional resources, such as trained peer support specialists or peer education services, clubs focused on mental health (such as NAMI on Campus and Active Minds) and spaces for open dialogue about mental health.

If you have an existing mental health condition or develop a condition, learn more about your college's office for students with disabilities. Talk with the office about possible accommodations for your condition, if needed.



HEALTH INFORMATION PRIVACY LAWS AND RULES

If you experience distress or a mental health condition and seek help at college, you should know how your health information is protected and what your options are for sharing health information with your parents or trusted adults.

Health privacy and confidentiality laws protect your health records, including mental health records, because if you are over age 18, you are legally entitled to this protection. These laws safeguard your information, but they can also prevent colleges from contacting your parents if you are facing significant challenges or a serious mental health condition. Yet, parents or a trusted adult may be important sources of support if you experience challenges, especially at the onset of a mental health condition or if an existing condition worsens or results in hospitalization.



PARENTS CAN SHARE INFORMATION

Parents are legally permitted to share information about you with the school or mental health professionals. This one-way communication can help if your parents or a trusted adult are worried about you or have important information about your mental health, including medications, successful treatment approaches, co-occurring medical conditions or special needs.

Health privacy and confidentiality laws require an emergency or an imminent threat of harm to self or to other people before parents may be contacted and health information shared. While many people believe that parents would be contacted in a serious situation, this is not always the case. The interpretation of “emergency” or “imminent threat of harm to self or other people” can vary, and identifying when you or someone you know is experiencing a mental health crisis is not always easy. Further, a mental health provider may believe that the family is a major source of conflict or distress and could worsen the situation. In assessing difficult situations, providers often choose to protect health information.

If you are over age 18, you can decide whether or not to authorize the sharing of health information with your parents or a trusted adult and, if so, what information you are willing to share. Consider completing an authorization form before you leave for school so that your parents or a trusted adult can help you if you experience a mental health challenge. If you have an existing mental health condition and value your parents’ or another trusted adult’s support, it is especially important to consider completing an authorization form. And remember, you retain the right to revoke your authorization at any time.

Two federal laws regulate when information included in your student education records and health information may be shared with your family or others. The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) protects information in your student education records. The Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) protects your health information.



LAWS AND RULES ON HEALTH PRIVACY⁵

Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)

What does FERPA apply to?

FERPA applies to student education records including records kept in college counseling and health clinics

What protection does FERPA provide?

FERPA prohibits colleges from sharing information in student records with parents, with narrow exceptions such as:

- In a health or safety emergency
- If parents document that the student is claimed as a tax dependent
- With written authorization from the student

Can I sign a FERPA authorization form allowing my parents or others to access my education records?

Yes, FERPA authorization forms are offered by most colleges online or through the office of the Academic Dean.

Note: FERPA authorization forms do not permit clinicians to share protected health information. That requires you to complete an authorization form, such as the one included with this guide.

Are there state laws and other rules that protect my records kept in the campus counseling center?

Yes, mental health providers working in campus counseling centers may also be subject to state laws and professional licensing rules that are more restrictive than FERPA.

Note: These laws and rules may restrict mental health professionals from communicating with parents. Your written authorization is important if you want your mental health provider to share information with your parent, such as if you experience a serious situation or a mental health crisis.

⁵ *Mental Health Care in the College Community*. Edited by Jerald Kay and Victor Schwartz © 2010 John Wiley & Sons, Ltd. (Book Chapter 7: Karen Bower, J.D., and Victor Schwartz, M.D. *Legal-Ethical Issues in College Mental Health*).

Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA)

What does HIPAA apply to?

HIPAA applies to health information kept by health care providers outside of the campus community, such as:

- community psychiatrists
- therapists and counselors
- campus-based university hospitals

What protection does HIPAA provide?

HIPAA prohibits the sharing of your health information with your parents except:

- In a health or safety emergency
- When an individual presents a threat of harm to self or others
- With verbal or written authorization from the student

Can I sign a HIPAA authorization form allowing my parents or others to access my health information?

Yes, this guide includes an authorization form for you to use to disclose information to others. You also have the right to access your health information, although psychotherapy notes are generally not disclosed.

Note: HIPAA does not allow psychotherapy notes to be shared unless an authorization form specifically authorizes the disclosure. Even then, therapists may refuse to disclose therapy notes.

Are there state laws that cover my health information?

Maybe; some states have laws that are more restrictive than HIPAA. However, a signed authorization should permit disclosure. Unlike FERPA and student education records, parents are not permitted to access health information by showing that they claim you as a tax dependent.

By discussing these issues with your parents or a trusted adult and planning ahead, you can make thoughtful and informed decisions about sharing mental health information instead of having to decide when a mental health condition develops or worsens and the stakes may be considerably higher. With an understanding of health privacy laws and rules and the circumstances in which colleges can communicate with your parents, you are better equipped to have an informed conversation about information-sharing.

As you consider whether you want to authorize your parents or a trusted adult to have access to protected health information, keep in mind the following:

- Your school must have verbal or written authorization before disclosing health information to your parents or others unless there is a serious or imminent threat of harm to self or others and under other narrow exceptions.

TYPICAL SCENARIOS INVOLVING HEALTH PRIVACY

- Parents call a college counselor who is working with their son to say that, on his last phone call home, he sounded down and has not returned texts or calls for three days. They are worried. HIPAA and FERPA do not limit the ability of families to reach out to treating providers. Families may also send documents to the counselor or college administrators with their concerns. They may also ask for the college to check in with the student. The counselor is likely to tell the student that the parents called and that they are worried about the student. However, without authorization, the counselor may not respond with specific or detailed information, but they may listen to the family and often do. The counselor may, however, discuss certain topics or information with the family if the student has authorized the counselor to do so. *(MORE ON NEXT PAGE)*



- A mother receives a call from her child's roommate, who says she is worried about the student; she is not going to class, rarely leaves the dorm room and is not doing well. The parent calls the dean of students and leaves a message, then calls the counseling center to find out if her daughter is receiving services and to get help. Without authorization, the dean and counseling center will likely not share any details about the student with the family but may talk with the family with general information. School staff and administrators are likely to look into the welfare of the student. However, if they do not believe that the situation involves an emergency or an imminent threat of harm to self or others, they will likely not share information about the student with the family without approval from the student.



- A student is talking with a therapist in the counseling center and shares that he is having suicidal thoughts. The therapist expresses concern and asks for permission to contact his family. The student agrees, and they call his mother together to tell her about what is happening. If the student had not agreed, then the counselor would have had to decide whether the circumstances allowed her to contact the student's family. If the counselor decides to contact family, the student should be informed that this is going to happen unless the counselor believes that this step would be dangerous.

- A student stops coming to class, and her grades are slipping fast. Several people on campus know about these circumstances, including friends and college faculty. However, the family may not know, and schools are not obligated to tell the family despite the fact that this behavior may be a warning sign that the student is experiencing a mental health challenge. Privacy laws also prevent schools from sharing information about a student's academic performance without a student's consent.



- Your school may offer an authorization form for releasing health information on its website. If it does, use the school's form. If not, use the form included with this guide.
- You may specify what types of health or mental health information you authorize for disclosure (and to whom) on an authorization form. You can authorize sharing of very limited information or more mental health information.
- A new authorization form must be completed each year. If you like, you may authorize sharing for a time period of less than one year.
- Complete an authorization form before you leave for school and submit your form to the student counseling or health center so they have it on file. You and your parents or trusted adult should also keep copies.
- If you receive treatment from a community mental health clinic, hospital or off-campus mental health provider, you must sign a new authorization form for providers to be permitted to talk with your parents or other trusted adult.
- Because failing grades or academic probation can be a warning sign of distress, substance use or a mental health condition, you should also discuss completing an authorization form for releasing academic information. However, a FERPA release related to academic information does not authorize the sharing of your health information.





KEY TAKEAWAYS

Starting a family conversation about mental health is beneficial for everyone. Conversations allow you to plan for what to do if you or someone you know experiences distress or a mental health condition—or if an existing condition gets worse. Remember these key points:

- College is an exciting time in life and an important time to maintain self-care and find ways to manage stress.
- Mental health conditions are common among college students.
- Know the common warning signs and what to do if you experience one or more.
- If you need help, reach out. You are not alone, and help is available on campus and in the community.
- Decide what information you want shared with family and trusted friends and be proactive about letting your school know.





RESOURCES

NAMI

- www.nami.org

NAMI on Campus Clubs

- <http://www.nami.org/Get-Involved/NAMI-on-Campus/NAMI-on-Campus-Clubs>

The Jed Foundation (JED)

- www.jedfoundation.org

Other JED Programs

- *JED Campus*: www.jedcampus.org/
- *Ulifeline*: www.ulifeline.org/
- *Half of Us*: www.halfofus.com/
- *Love is Louder*: www.loveislouder.com/
- *Set to Go*: settogo.org/

Active Minds

- www.activeminds.org

Substance Abuse Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)

- www.samhsa.gov/school-campus-health

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS): health information privacy and HIPAA

- www.hhs.gov/hipaa/index.html

U.S. Department of Education and HHS: Joint Guidance on FERPA and HIPAA and student health records

- <http://www2.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/fpco/doc/ferpa-hipaa-guidance.pdf>

National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH)

- www.nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/depression-and-college-students-new/index.shtml

More Information about HIPAA and FERPA

- *Student Mental Health and the Law*: www.jedfoundation.org/assets/Programs/Program_downloads/StudentMentalHealth_Law_2008.pdf
- *Supporting Students: A Model Policy for Colleges and Universities*: www.bazelon.org/Where-We-Stand/Community-Integration/Campus-Mental-Health.aspx



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