Traversing the Transition to College: Assisting Students with Mental Health Concerns

Services for Teens at Risk (STAR) Conference 2021
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OBJECTIVES

1. Describe common developmental themes for students transitioning to college

2. Discuss ways to examine mental health services offered by a college or university

3. Identify concrete steps to preparing for the transition to college
Going to college is often exciting, idealized, and highly anticipated.
College is stressful under optimal conditions.
IDENTITY

- Who Am I (Now)?
- Values
- Major | Career Path
- Social Being
- Sexual Orientation
- Gender Identity

AUTONOMY | INDEPENDENCE

- Adulting
- Activities of Daily Living
- Independence | Interdependence
- Navigating Family Stress

EXPERIMENTATION

- Relationship Intimacy
- Substance Use
- Sexual Behaviors

CHICKERING AND REISSER (1993)
Top Reasons That Students Don't Seeking Help for Mental Health Concerns

- Embarrassment: 61%
- Not Understanding that They Have a Mental Health Issue: 50%
- Fear of Having Their Friends Find Out: 49%
- Fear of Having Their Family Find Out: 38%
- Fear that Their Issue Won't be Taken Seriously: 37%
- Not Knowing About Available Resources to Help: 36%
- The Belief that Their Mental Health Concerns are No Big Deal: 35%
- Fear of Getting in Trouble with Caregivers: 34%
- Distrust of Teachers or School Administrators: 33%
- The Belief that Counselors or Administrators are Unhelpful: 30%
- Fear of Getting in Trouble at School: 27%
- Lack of Money: 19%
- Not Having Health Insurance: 14%
- Lack of Time: 12%
Students who screen positive for mental health symptoms are not receiving formal care.

Teens with a history of mental illness reported that the pandemic is exacerbating their condition.

Healthy Minds Study, 2020
University Counseling Centers (UCC) and Counseling and Psychological Services (CaPS)

**Intake**
- Assessment of needs
- In-house counseling and/or referral
- Often virtual during COVID

**Referral**
- Recommended at any time
- After short-term counseling
- UCC web site
- Consultation
University Counseling Centers (UCC) and Counseling and Psychological Services (CaPS)

Individual
- Short-term
- Session limit
- Co-pay
- Primarily virtual during COVID

Groups
- Focused on Identity/theme
- Skill acquisition
- Virtual during COVID
University Counseling Centers (UCC) and Counseling and Psychological Services (CaPS)

Psychiatry
- UCC or Student Health Center
- Documentation from previous psychiatrist/MD
- Concurrent participation in counseling

Consultation
- Faculty
- Staff (Residence Life, Student Affairs, Campus Police)
- Parents
- Off-campus therapists
DURING COVID

- Services transitioned to virtual platform
- Fewer students seeking services
- State licensure limits accessibility for counseling/therapy
- UCCs offering broader variety of services
- Increased focus on webinars, groups, skills clinics, outreach programs
**RESIDENCE LIFE**
- Resident Director
- Area Coordinator
- Housing = building, Resident = student

**CASE MANAGER**
- Student Affairs Staff
- Consults with multiple University partners
- Navigates campus & community resources
- Coordinates communication of information

**FAMILY RESOURCES**
- University "Parent" resource web site
- Campus "Parent" group
- Social media
DISABILITY RESOURCES

- Provides accommodations
- Includes mental health diagnoses
- Informs professors of accommodation (not diagnosis)
- Often requires documentation

LOCAL NEWSPAPERS

- Student Affairs Staff
- Consults with multiple University partners
- Navigates campus & community resources
- Oversees communication of information
• Discuss continuing care with therapist back home

• Discuss mental health care expectations

• Research mental health services – on and off campus
  ○ Cost of services
  ○ Session limits
  ○ Intake process

• Research insurance coverage
  ○ In/out-of-network mental health benefits
  ○ In/out-of-network benefits for specialized treatment
  ○ Recommendations from UCC
PARENT PREPARATION

- Coordinate sharing of information by current therapist
- Locate contact information for campus Wellness Check
- Identify crisis services
  - UCC
  - Text and hotline numbers
- Identify local psychiatric hospital(s), specialized treatment centers
STUDENT
PREPARATION
AND PRACTICE

- Identify and describe your diagnosis
- Describe how your symptoms impact your life
- Describe your treatment and clinical history
- Describe what has and hasn't been helpful about your treatment
- Know the names and contact information of your treatment providers
- Know the name, dosage, and changes in medication
- Take medication independently
- Refill medication independently
- Carry your insurance card
- Replace lost insurance card
• Research university counseling services
• Research psychiatric services on or near campus
• Plan how and when you will contact counseling center to make an appointment
• Find the physical location of the counseling center during orientation (or on a campus map)
• Identify required documents for Accommodations (Disability Resources)
• Obtain all documents required to apply for accommodations
• Research campus crisis/after-hours resources
• Add crisis resource numbers to cell phone contacts
• Transition to managing more Activities of Daily Living (waking independently, laundry, grocery shopping)
RESOURCES

Managing a Mental Health Condition in College | NAMI: National Alliance on Mental Illness
https://www.nami.org/Your-Journey/Teens-Young-Adults/Managing-a-Mental-Health-Condition-in-College

Set To Go Program | JED Foundation
https://www.settogo.org

STAR Center | University of Pittsburgh
https://www.starcenter.pitt.edu/useful-links

STAR Center Young Adult Transition Group: A Treatment Manual