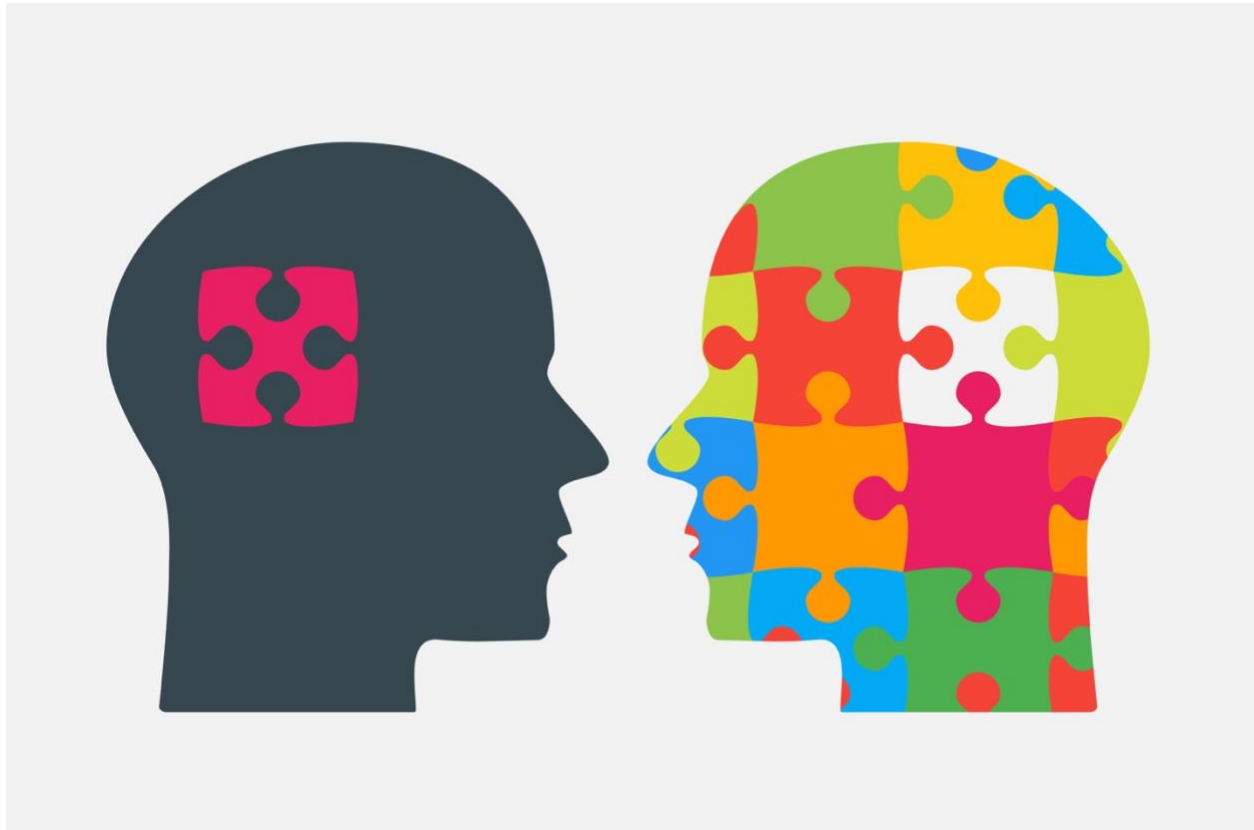


UPDATED 2023!

A Parent's Guide to College Student Mental Health (Ithaca Edition)



Sending children off to college is an exciting experience for many parents. Naturally, our focus is on the wonderful opportunities they will have, as we look with pride upon their promising passage into adulthood. But these stressful times require parents to also fully grasp the serious mental health challenges their students *may* face, and be equipped to provide support.

What do parents need to know?

Though some may hide or downplay it, college creates a load of stressors for many young people including those whose identities are partly formed around past outstanding achievement. There's the stress of managing independence without the support of families and friends back home; the stress of fitting in with new peer groups and romantic relationships; the stress of meeting personal and family expectations amid tougher and more competitive academics; the stress of landing summer internships, applying to grad school, and finding career opportunities after graduation.

Rates of depression and anxiety are high among college students. In fact, many students carry suicidal thoughts. Sexual assault is prevalent among college students. Hazing violence as an initiation rite at fraternities and some student organizations is a serious problem.

All of these factors pose even greater risks for students who arrive on campus with a mental health or substance use disorder. College psychological counseling centers are typically overwhelmed by demands for appointments, and navigating community mental health services and insurance coverage can exacerbate stress.

In short, many parents cannot imagine that the happy and excited kid that they dropped off at the campus dorm could develop a serious mental health problem while at college. Yet, failure to understand the realities of college student life today, and help with challenges that may arise, can lead to serious consequences.

"Mental health problems can affect many areas of students' lives, reducing their quality of life, academic achievement, physical health, and satisfaction with the college experience, and negatively impacting relationships with friends and family members," says the [Suicide Prevention Resource Center \(SPRC\)](#). "These issues can also have long-term consequences for students, affecting their future employment, earning potential, and overall health."

Making matters worse, research has found that Covid-19 pandemic conditions, including campus closures, online classes, and personal isolation, burdened college students with additional stressors.

In a [BestColleges.com survey](#) conducted in Spring 2021, 95 percent of college students reported negative mental health symptoms because of the pandemic. Forty-eight percent said that the mental health effects directly impacted their education. In response to questions about specific symptoms, 46 percent experienced social isolation or loneliness, 45 percent felt increased anxiety, 36 percent reported increased depression, and 32 percent said they had feelings of hopelessness.

Data taken in Fall 2020 from [137 college counseling centers](#) showed that 94 percent of students seeking campus mental health care reported that Covid-19 had negatively impacted at least one aspect of their lives; 72 percent cited their mental health, 68 percent motivation or focus, 67 percent loneliness or isolation, 66 percent academics, and 60 percent missed experiences and opportunities.

Additional specific data to know:

- 75 percent of mental illness cases begin by age 24, according to the [National Alliance on Mental Illness](#).
- Suicide is the third leading cause of death among young people aged 15-24 years, according to the [U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#).
- 52.7 percent of college students surveyed reported that academics have been "traumatic or very difficult to handle," and 19.8 percent "felt so depressed that it was difficult to function" in the past 12 months, according to the [Spring 2019 National College Health Assessment](#); 9.3 percent seriously considered suicide in the last 12 months, and 1.6 percent had attempted suicide.

- 34.2 percent of surveyed college students seeking counseling in the 2021-22 academic year had experienced “serious suicidal ideation,” (up from 23.8 percent in the 2010-11 academic year who “seriously considered attempting suicide”), according to the [Center for Collegiate Mental Health 2022 Annual Report](#); 10.1 percent of the students seeking counseling had actually made a suicide attempt.
- 15.6 percent of female seniors (or higher) participating in the [Association of American Universities 2019 Campus Climate Survey on Sexual Assault and Sexual Misconduct](#) reported being raped (“completed penetration using physical force or the victim was unable to consent or stop what was happening”) since enrolling in college.
- 55 percent of college students involved in clubs, teams, and organizations experience hazing, according to [“Hazing in View: College Students at Risk.”](#) Approximately 50 U.S. college students have died in hazing-related incidents since 2010, according to author [Hank Nuwer](#).
- In the past month, 22.5 percent of college students used illicit drugs, and 33 percent engaged in binge alcohol drinking, according to a [2019 study](#) by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA).

When parents *do* fully grasp the scope of the challenges, they are more attuned to how their student is handling the major life transition from home to college. Parents especially need to understand the risk factors and warning signs for a mental health crisis, and how to support their student if they should exhibit cause for concern. Help can range from staying connected with moral support and positive encouragement to evaluating and navigating mental health treatment options at the college counseling center, in the community, or back home during a health leave of absence.

McLean Hospital, a psychiatric teaching hospital of Harvard Medical School, provides these basic [tips for parents](#):

- *Prepare Your Child for the Unexpected*
- *The Importance of Staying in Touch and Validation*
- *Encourage Healthy Habits*
- *Make Room for Mistakes*
- *Have a Plan Focused on Student Mental Health*
- *Learn About College Mental Health Services*
- *If a Student Is Struggling, Get Help Immediately*

Here is a curated list of helpful resources for supporting your college student's mental health:

Mental Health

[Risk Factors, Protective Factors, and Warning Signs](#), American Foundation for Suicide Prevention

[Mental Health Conditions](#), National Alliance on Mental Illness

Parents

[Parent and Family Guide: Supporting Your College Student Through Mental Health Challenges](#), Forefront Suicide Prevention

[Set to Go: For Families](#), The JED Foundation

[Set to Go: College Transition](#), The JED Foundation

[A Parent's Guide to College Student Mental Health](#), McLean Hospital

[Mental Health in College](#), National Alliance on Mental Illness

[Life on Campus](#), Mental Health America

[What Parents Need to Know: #GoodforMEDia's Guide to Social Media](#), Center for Youth Mental Health and Wellbeing, Stanford University

[College Depression: What Parents Need to Know](#), Mayo Clinic

Cornell University and Ithaca College

Cornell University: [Mental Health at Cornell](#)

Cornell University: [Resources for Families](#)

Cornell University: [First Year Families](#)

Cornell University: [How to Support Your Student](#)

Cornell University: [Family Guide 2020-2021](#)

Ithaca College: [Guiding a First-Year College Student](#)

College Mental Health Reports

[Mental Health Review Final Report April 2020](#), Cornell University

[“Commending Cornell's Mental Health Recommendations.”](#) The Sophie Fund

[“Recommendations for Improved Student Mental Health at Cornell University.”](#) The Sophie Fund

[“Aiming for a Student Mental Health Gold Standard at Cornell University.”](#) The Sophie Fund

[Report of the Task Force on Managing Student Mental Health July 2020](#), Harvard University

[Task Force on Student Mental Health and Well-being, Office of the Provost, February 2018,](#)
Johns Hopkins University

[The Healthy Minds Study 2021-22](#)

[Depression, Anxiety, Loneliness Are Peaking in College Students,](#) The Brink, Boston University

[Center for Collegiate Mental Health 2022 Annual Report](#)

[The Association for University and College Counseling Center Directors Annual Survey 2018](#)

[National College Health Assessment Spring 2019,](#) American College Health Association

[Supporting Students: A Model Policy for Colleges and Universities,](#) Judge David L. Bazelon
Center for Mental Health Law

[Addressing the Mental Health Needs of Students on College Campuses,](#) Judge David L. Bazelon
Center for Mental Health Law

[Mental Health on College Campuses: Investments, Accommodations Needed to Address Student Needs,](#) National Council on Disability

[Behavioral Health Among College Students,](#) Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services
Administration (SAMHSA)

Suicide

[Suicide among College and University Students in the United States,](#) Suicide Prevention
Resource Center

[Consequences of Student Mental Health Issues,](#) Suicide Prevention Resource Center

Sexual Assault

[2020 Report on the AAU Campus Climate Survey on Sexual Assault and Sexual Misconduct,](#)
Association of American Universities

[Campus Sexual Violence,](#) Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network (RAINN)

Hazing

[Hazing in View: College Students at Risk,](#) National Study of Student Hazing 2008

Substance Use

[College Drinking,](#) National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism

[Substance Abuse In College Students: Statistics & Addiction Treatment,](#) American Addiction
Centers

Recent Media Articles

[“Did Covid Break Students’ Mental Health?”](#) *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, October 14, 2021

[“College students struggle with mental health as pandemic drags on,”](#) *The Washington Post*, October 14, 2021

[“A ‘Breaking Point’ in Campus Mental Health,”](#) *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, July 15, 2021

[“The Inner Pandemic,”](#) *The New York Times*, 2022

ITHACA CONTACT INFORMATION

Emergency

[Ithaca Police Department](#) (607) 272 9973

[Cornell University Emergency Assistance](#) (607) 255 1111

[Ithaca College Emergency Assistance](#) (607) 274 3333

[988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline](#) 988 or (800) 273 8255

[Crisis Text Line 24/7](#) Text “Home” to 741-741

[Veterans Crisis Line](#) Dial 988 then press 1 or send a text message to 838255

[The Trevor Project](#) (866) 488 7386 or text START to 678678

College Mental Health Crisis

[Cornell University Counseling and Psychological Services \(CAPS\)](#) (607) 255 5155

[Ithaca College Center for Counseling and Psychological Services \(CAPS\)](#) (607) 274 3177

[Tompkins Cortland Community College Mental Health Services](#) (607) 844 6577

Rape and Sexual Assault

[Advocacy Center of Tompkins County](#) (607) 277 5000

[Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network \(RAINN\)](#) (800) 656 4673



