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Student Issues

There's a seasonal ebb and flow when it comes to student issues. Here are a few things your student may be experiencing this month:

- ▲ Getting adjusted to college life for the first time (or once again)—feelings of loneliness and homesickness
- ▲ Worries about being able to handle academic pressures and schedule
- ▲ Anxiety about perceived restrictions of campus policies
- ▲ Roommate adjustments and conflicts
- ▲ Money management struggles
- ▲ Experimentation with drugs and alcohol
- ▲ International students may feel confusion, vulnerability and lack of advocacy
- ▲ Lack of social life and lots of questions about how to get involved in new activities

Conquering Fear Factors

What students may be thinking

Getting involved, meeting new people and finding your place on campus can be overload for some students. They may have certain fears—whether you deem them “rational” or not—about all of it.

Here are some of the fears they may express when thinking about getting involved:

- I'm afraid I'll look stupid.
- What if no one agrees with what I say?
- This is my chance to make a good first impression—I don't want people thinking I'm a dork.
- What if my voice shakes when I talk or I don't make any sense?
- Will people in this group accept me?
- What if I'm so different from the others that we have nothing in common?
- Will I self disclose too much, making others uncomfortable?
- Will I seem smart enough to be in college if I open my mouth?
- What if the group attacks me? Will I be able to respond intelligently?

Some students imagine the “what ifs” and let their fears get the better of them. You can help by:

- Listening without judgment
- Not just offering “You can do it!” encouragement, but going the next step to help them figure out how they can do it
- Reminding them that college is full of all sorts of people to connect with, not necessarily the cliques they may have experienced other places
- Encouraging them to talk with a support person on campus about their fears, whether it's a residence hall director, an advisor, a coach or a counselor—there are lots of folks ready and willing to listen and problem-solve with your student!
- Letting your student know that you support her, no matter what, and reminding her of times when she has attacked her fears successfully—that'll help build her confidence mightily

It's natural to have some fear of the unknown—and college life holds its share. Yet, with your support and that of other good folks on campus, we can all set your student up for success!



Alcohol Poisoning: The Facts

Much as we all try to educate students about the dangers involved with high-risk drinking, they may find themselves

in a situation where alcohol poisoning occurs. Here is some information to share with



your student so that she can help herself and her friends steer clear of this potentially life-threatening issue.

What Happens to Your Body When You Get Alcohol Poisoning?

- Alcohol depresses nerves that control your breathing and gag reflex (which prevents choking). A fatal dose of alcohol will eventually stop these functions.
- It's common that you'll vomit if you drink a lot, since alcohol is a stomach irritant. Then you're in danger of choking on vomit, which can cause death by asphyxiation if you're unconscious due to intoxication.
- Your blood alcohol concentration (BAC) can continue to rise even when you're passed out. After you stop drinking, alcohol in the stomach and intestines continues to enter the bloodstream and circulate throughout your body.

Standard Drink Sizes

- 12 oz. of beer
- 8-9 oz. of malt liquor
- 5 oz. of wine
- 1.5 oz. of 80-proof liquor

Source: www.collegedrinkingprevention.gov

- It's dangerous to assume that anyone will be fine by sleeping it off!

What Should I Do If I Suspect Someone Has Alcohol Poisoning?

- Know the danger signals.
- Do not wait for all symptoms to be present.
- Be aware that a person who has passed out may die.
- Get residence life staff involved right away—don't worry at all about "getting someone in trouble," as his life is at stake.
- If there is any suspicion of an alcohol overdose, call 911 for help. Don't try to guess the level of drunkenness.

What Can Happen to Someone With Alcohol Poisoning That Goes Untreated?

- Victim chokes on his or her own vomit
- Breathing slows, becomes irregular or stops
- Heart beats irregularly or stops
- Hypothermia (low body temperature)
- Hypoglycemia (too little blood sugar) leads to seizures
- Untreated severe dehydration from vomiting can cause

Critical Signs of Alcohol Poisoning

- ▲ Mental confusion, stupor, coma or person can't be roused
- ▲ Vomiting
- ▲ Seizures
- ▲ Slow breathing (fewer than eight breaths per minute)
- ▲ Irregular breathing (10 seconds or more between breaths)
- ▲ Hypothermia (low body temperature), bluish skin color, paleness

seizures, permanent brain damage or death

Even if the victim lives, an alcohol overdose can lead to irreversible brain damage. Rapid high-risk drinking (which often happens on a bet or a dare) is especially dangerous because the victim can ingest a fatal dose before becoming unconscious.

Remind your student that there's no need to be afraid to seek medical help for a friend who has had too much to drink. Instead of worrying that their friend may become angry or embarrassed, they can focus on the fact that they cared enough to help.

Source: www.collegedrinkingprevention.gov

The Quest for Character

Being a student—and a person—of character is something emphasized during your student's time at college. Six of the main pillars of character often focused on include:

1. Trustworthiness
2. Respect
3. Responsibility
4. Fairness
5. Caring
6. Citizenship

By discussing these with your student now and during the school year, you can keep the quest for character-building present. Then it'll be up to your student to determine what being a person of character means to him.

Source: The Character Counts Coalition (www.charactercounts.org)

When Meeting Someone with a Disability or Special Need

Your student will be interacting with a variety of folks during his time on campus, including people with disabilities and special needs. This can sometimes make folks nervous because they worry they are going to say the wrong thing or use an incorrect term. Or, they may be anxious because they have never met someone with a particular special need. The following “dos” and “don’ts” can help increase your student’s comfort level:



Do:

- Be yourself! Talk about the same things you would with anyone else.
- Remember that people with disabilities are people first.
- Acquaint yourself with the basics of common disabilities.
- Ask if the person needs help, if you think that may be the case, before assuming so. Some people with disabilities like to do things for themselves while others appreciate the kind gesture of offering assistance. Your offer of help may be accepted or rejected. When accepted, be sure to ask what type of help is needed. When rejected, try not to take it personally.
- Be considerate with your questions. Don’t let your curiosity get the best of you. Respect the person’s privacy. If she wants to share information with you, it’ll happen.
- Be patient. Some disabilities make people walk, talk or think at a different pace.

- Keep in mind the level of accessibility available at events you are helping to organize. Some things to consider are the level of distractions and background noises in an area; the availability of an interpreter or closed captioning; and physical obstacles such as the width of doorways, height of counters, and presence of curbs or stairs.

Don’t:

- Make assumptions or pass judgments about a person’s capabilities or interests.
- Stare at a person who has a disability with which you are unfamiliar.
- Assume that all people with a similar disability have the same limitations. Disabilities are broad in scope and may impact

folks differently, depending on their age, personality, experience and comfort level, as well as the environment in which they are operating.

- Be overprotective, oversolicitous or oversensitive. Offering pity or charity to someone simply because he has a disability is disrespectful and patronizing, no matter what the intention. People with disabilities may not be able to do everything you can do (sometimes they can do it better!), but that doesn’t mean they are less than, inferior to or more unfortunate than you.
- Share information about a person’s disability if it was told to you in confidence. When the person is comfortable sharing with others, she will do so. It is not your place to discuss someone’s disability with others, no matter how visible or invisible the disability may be.

People First Language

People First Language focuses on the ability rather than the disability and on people instead of conditions. For instance:

- ▲ Instead of “the blind,” refer to “people who have visual impairments.” This emphasizes the importance of the person involved rather than equating him with his condition.
- ▲ Instead of saying someone is “wheelchair bound,” refer to her as a “person who uses a wheelchair.” This demonstrates that the wheelchair is not a confining device but a helpful apparatus being used by a capable human being.
- ▲ Referring to someone with a disability as a “sufferer” or a “victim” tends to impose value judgments that are often untrue. These terms can be disempowering to a person with a disability who doesn’t want to be considered helpless and at the mercy of uncontrollable forces.

People First Language is intended to do just that—put the people involved at the forefront rather than focusing on their disabilities.

Source: Journal of College and University Student Housing, Volume 24, Number 1, Summer 1994

Nap Attack!

There's nothing like a comfy bed, beckoning you to nap. And that may not be such a bad thing! In a society where we often tend to be sleep-deprived, short naps are becoming one tool to help improve mood, alertness and performance while reducing mistakes and accidents. They give us a way to relax and rejuvenate.

So, as your student establishes her sleep patterns at school, jumping in bed for a brief nap could be useful.

To get the most out of napping, the National Sleep Foundation offers the following tips:

- Naps should be the right length, about 20-30 minutes, to maximize short-term alertness. This way, nappers won't get groggy or have a difficult time going to sleep that night.
- Naps should be in the right environment, where the temperature is comfortable, noise is limited and little light is filtering in.
- Naps shouldn't be too late in the day, when they could affect your nighttime sleep, or too early in the day, when your body might not be ready for more sleep.

Getting good, consistent sleep at school is important for all students, as being overtired can cause moodiness, a lack of energy, stress, anger and a higher susceptibility to illness. Plus, it can result in difficulty retaining new information and a lack of concentration, two very essential skills that will help your student succeed academically. If tossing a nap into the mix sometimes helps, it could be okay.

Connecting with Community Resources

The resources available to students and their families around here are numerous! Yet, as the beginning of the academic year is just around the corner, there are some resources within the community that you may want to get intimately familiar with right away.

- ▲ **A Bank.** Where will your student do her banking when she's at school? Getting this situated now will make things easier throughout the year.
- ▲ **A Hotel for Parent/Family Weekend.** It's a good idea to book this now, if you haven't already, to beat the rush! Places can sell out quickly. And, while you're at it, making dinner reservations couldn't hurt either.
- ▲ **A Mechanic.** If your student has a car on campus, urge him to ask around to see whom local folks use as their mechanic. Asking people like housekeeping and

support staff makes a lot of sense—they know this town!

- ▲ **A Place of Worship.** If your student is inclined to attend services, there are options.
- ▲ **A Spot of Nature.** It's good for students to have a little campus get-away, whether it's a city park, a hiking trail or a lake. Take a look at a map to see what's close by.
- ▲ **Health Care Options.** If your student needs mental or physical health care while away at school, don't hesitate to connect with the campus health center for help and referrals. It'll provide great peace of mind to have these things in place.

Connecting with these community resources—and more—now will add to the comfort level in your student's new town. Our community is looking forward to welcoming you and your student!

The Name Game

You and your student will both be meeting many new people this academic year. Here are some tricks to help you remember names:

- **Unique Features.** Focus on something interesting about the person, from hair color to a wacky interest they may have.
- **Repetition.** During your first meeting, repeat the person's name out loud ("It's really nice to meet you, Steph!"). Also, say the name to yourself several times during that first encounter.
- **Mnemonic.** Try turning the person's name into a mental image of an object. For instance, Steph sounds like "step" so this will remind you of her from now on.
- **Associate.** While repeating the name, try to associate the mnemonic with the person. Steph sounds like "step" so imagine her running up the stairs.
- **Double Take.** At the end of your initial encounter, repeat the person's name ("See you later, Steph!").
- **Write it Down.** And if your memory needs a nudge, write it down!

Practice the name game and soon you'll be a pro, able to remember the friends and professors that your student is talking about, as well as the people you meet on campus, too!

