

On-Campus Safety

Overview

A college or university campus is a dynamic and exciting community. For most students, this is their first experience being away from home, living in a dorm, and navigating shared spaces and communal living. Fortunately, when students cultivate friendships, learn to take care of each other, develop safe habits, and connect with campus resources, life on campus can be fun and safe.

Prepare

Before you photocopy the student handout, add phone numbers, addresses, and/or URLs for essential campus safety and security resources like campus security, campus escort services, wellness center, student crisis line, etc.

Discuss

Begin with a show-of-hands question to gauge students' experience with living on a campus. Ask: *Who has lived on a campus before?* If this is a new experience for many students, share that college and university campuses are dynamic and exciting places to live, but also present some new challenges that will require students to develop new life skills, cultivate new friendships, and learn new safety habits. Have students introduce themselves to the group and briefly discuss their thoughts about living on a campus. Ask: *What excites you about living on campus? What worries do you have? How has it gone so far?* Invite several students to share their responses.

Share the campus crime statistics provided on the next page and review campus safety and security-related data for your school using the U.S. Department of Education Campus Safety and Security-Related Data website (URL on page 9). Identify the types of crimes that are most common on your campus. For most schools, dorm room theft is the most significant threat, so invite students to share strategies for minimizing their risk. Record answers on the board. Encourage students to consider how building a strong sense of community in their dorm might increase safety. Ask: *What are ways you can look out for each other?*

Next, have students consider how they will keep themselves and their belongings safe as they move around campus. Ask: *How can you support each other in staying safe as you move about campus?*

Review on-campus resources for student safety such as the locations of blue lights, security desk stations, campus incident alert systems, and campus escort services. Encourage students to take advantage of these resources and always contact campus security if they feel unsafe, need assistance, or have been the victim of a crime.

Share with students that mental and physical health are also important aspects of maintaining a safe campus community. As a group, review the findings of the American College Health Association regarding undergrad mental health (URL on page 9). Highlight that, unfortunately, many students report experiencing feelings of anxiety, hopelessness, and depression. If not addressed, these feelings can worsen and even lead to self-harm and suicide. Ask: *How can you look out for each other and help reduce stress?*



Handout

Distribute copies of the *Play It Safe On Campus* handout and review the symptoms of depression listed on it. Next, invite students to discuss ways to respond when they notice signs of depression in themselves or someone else. Ask: *How can you take care of your own mental health and also support each other?* Share campus resources for mental and physical health.

Allow students time to review the entire handout and add any notes from the group discussions. Encourage students to take a moment to add important campus numbers to their phones.

Wrap-Up

Remind students that campus safety is everyone's responsibility and it starts with speaking up if we notice something that's unsafe or suspicious. Invite students to brainstorm ways to build community connections and share important safety tips with other students on campus. Possible ideas could include organizing a community picnic and distributing safety flyers to all who attend; knocking on your dorm neighbor's door to introduce yourself; and posting copies of the safety flyer in dorm hallways and other community spaces.

Share Out

Share this part of the toolkit with community members who play an important role in helping students create a caring culture on campus such as dorm managers, residential advisors, mental health counselors, campus religious leaders, health services administrators, and others positioned to mediate student relationships.

Resources

- Infographics and Fact Sheets on Mental Health Topics: nami.org/Learn-More/Fact-Sheet-Library
- U.S. Department of Education Campus Safety and Security-Related Data: ope.ed.gov/campussafety/#
- American College Health Association: acha.org/NCHA/ACHA-NCHA_Data/Publications_and_Reports/NCHA/Data/Reports_ACHA-NCHAllc.aspx
- Canadian Mental Health Association: cmha.ca/document-category/mental-health
- Be There: bethere.org
- Staying Safe on Campus tips from Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network (RAINN): rainn.org/articles/staying-safe-campus



Key Facts —

on Campus Crime

42% of reported campus crimes in 2016 were burglaries (12,000 incidents)...

31% ...were reported incidents of sexual assault (8,900 incidents)...

12% ...were motor vehicle thefts (3,500 incidents).¹

on Student Mental Health

55% of students surveyed in 2018 reported feeling that things were hopeless...

43% ...reported feeling so depressed that it was difficult to function...

13% ...seriously considered suicide during the past 12 months.²

¹ National Center for Education Statistics, nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=804

² American College Health Association, acha.org/documents/ncha/NCHA-II_Fall_2018_Undergraduate_Reference_Group_Executive_Summary.pdf
Some percentages have been rounded.

Play It Safe On Campus

WE CAN ALL PLAY A ROLE IN LOOKING OUT FOR EACH OTHER'S SAFETY AND CREATING A SAFER CAMPUS COMMUNITY. CHECK OUT THE TIPS BELOW. WHAT STEPS CAN YOU TAKE TO STAY SAFE ON CAMPUS?

Dorm Safety Checklist

- Keep your door locked, secure windows, and keep valuables in a locked drawer or safe.
- Memorize the location of emergency exits and practice your fire evacuation route.
- Program campus emergency numbers into your phone.
- Don't post personal information like your class schedule and dorm room number on social media.
- Understand your dorm's guest policy and security procedures.
- Do not open the door for strangers and alert staff to any suspicious activity.
- Make friends and build a community in your dorm; look out for each other.

Take Care of Each Other

How can you and your friends take care of each other? One tip: Talk. Talk about safety, how you're feeling, and how you're coping with stress.



Get There Safely!

- Stick together—whether walking, running, or riding somewhere, find a friend and head out together.
- Always use well-lit and well-traveled pathways; stay alert and keep distractions to a minimum.
- Let someone know where you are going and when you intend to come back.
- Use campus security personnel and shuttles.
- If riding a bike on campus, wear a helmet and obey all signage; alert pedestrians when passing them; and always lock up your bike.
- Sign up for campus alert texts to stay apprised of lockdown incidents on campus.
- When using rideshare apps, always remember to check the license plate, make, and model of the car, and the driver's identity before getting in the vehicle.

Mental Health Matters

- Get enough sleep. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), adults ages 18 to 60 years old need to be getting seven or more hours of sleep every night.¹
- Know the symptoms of depression, which can include: changes in sleep, changes in appetite, lack of concentration, lack of interest, loss of energy, and hopelessness.² If you think you might be depressed, speak to your advisor and health services.

Resources

U.S.

- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-TALK (8255)
- Crisis Text Line: Text HOME to 741741 to text with a trained Crisis Responder about any type of crisis, anytime.
- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) National Helpline: 1-800-662-HELP (4357)

Canada

- Crisis Services Canada: 1-833-456-4566
- Crisis Text Line: Text HOME to 686868 to text with a trained Crisis Responder about any type of crisis, anytime.

Campus Safety Resources

IF YOU NOTICE SOMETHING UNSAFE OR SUSPICIOUS, BE SURE TO REPORT IT. CAMPUS SAFETY IS EVERYONE'S RESPONSIBILITY.

¹ Watson NF, Badr MS, Belenky G, et al. Recommended amount of sleep for a healthy adult: a joint consensus statement of the American Academy of Sleep Medicine and Sleep Research Society. *Sleep*. 2015;38(6):843-844. Available at <http://jcsnm.aasm.org/ViewAbstract.aspx?pid=30048>.

² National Alliance on Mental Illness. [nami.org/NAMI/media/NAMI-Media/Images/FactSheets/Depression-FS.pdf](http://www.nami.org/NAMI/media/NAMI-Media/Images/FactSheets/Depression-FS.pdf)



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