

Set to Go High School Toolkit

A Guide to Helping Students
Emotionally Prepare for the
Transition to College



jedfoundation.org



SET TO GO

A JED PROGRAM

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Section 1:

Introduction

This toolkit is designed to give high schools a series of actions and resources to help prepare students for the emotional aspects of the transition to college. The toolkit is meant to give both individual school leadership and school district leadership some general suggestions on how to create a school environment that can help prepare students for college. We recommend that school and school district leadership read through the entire toolkit and disseminate it to relevant school staff and faculty, including school counselors, college counselors, school psychologists, school social workers, health and wellness instructors, school nurses, and other school-based personnel who work with students to enhance their emotional well-being and mental health and prepare them to transition to college. It will be beneficial to read and distribute the full toolkit to school-based mental health personnel and college counselors, but we expect that staff will pick and choose parts of this toolkit to implement and may not implement it in full due to time and other constraints.

The materials in this toolkit were developed by [The Jed Foundation \(JED\)](#), a non-profit that exists to protect emotional health and prevent suicide for our nation's teens and young adults. Through our school-based and direct-to-youth programs we: partner with high schools and colleges to strengthen their mental health, substance abuse and suicide prevention programs and systems; equip teens and young adults with the skills and knowledge to help themselves and each other; and encourage community awareness, understanding and action for young adult mental health.

[Set to Go](#), a JED program, was launched in 2017 to help high school students prepare for the transition to college and to life after high school. [Research](#) with first-year college students shows most wish they were better prepared – emotionally – for the transition from high school to college. This preparation should begin in high school and Set to Go was created precisely for this purpose. Set to Go was developed by JED with input from numerous advisors who graciously offered their time and expertise. See the list of professional and student advisors [here](#).

For more information about Set to Go and to get in touch with JED staff and experts, please see the “JED Services and Resources” section of this toolkit.

Section 2:

Supporting Students During the Application and Decision Process

This section provides guidance on supporting students during the college application and decision process. This is a time of potential high stress and high stakes decision-making for students, and they will often need support in both managing their stress and making important decisions about where to apply and attend school. For many students, this will be the first significant “adult” decision they have to make, and it is a great time to empower them with mature decision-making skills and abilities.

The first part of this section contains information primarily for school counselors and college counselors on how to help a student choose a school that is a good fit from a variety of standpoints, which can contribute to better success and lower levels of stress once in college. The section includes links to student worksheets and conversation guides for counselors around this topic.

The second part of this section contains some brief mindfulness exercises for students that can be implemented in a health class, advisory, study hall, or any other student gathering. We recommend sharing the mindfulness exercises and resources with all school faculty and staff and encouraging them to make use of them as a regular practice in classes and as part of other student activities.

Section 2A: Determining the Right Fit

Note: Before reading this section, we recommend reading more about the Right Fit concept on the Set to Go website [here](#) under the “Which College is Best for Me?” section.

A “right fit” school generally means a school that is a good fit from a psychosocial perspective. More than one school can be a good fit. We encourage students to think about factors other than academics, including size of the school, location, distance from home, demographics of the student body, aspects of student life, and approach to wellness, among other things. Finding a college or university that is the best fit for a particular student is often something that most students and families do not consider. It often requires that the student have a clear understanding of his or her values and identity. It may

also sometimes require considerable research about a particular institution. High school staff and faculty can help students through this process by initiating a conversation about “fit” and guiding students through a few pertinent exercises to determine what school might be a good fit for them. Below is a conversation guide that counselors can use to initiate the conversation with students and a tool called the Right Fit Quiz that students can use and review with counselors to help them determine what choices might be best for them. We recommend that school leadership provide copies of the conversation guide to all counselors and that counselors direct students to the [Right Fit Quiz](#).

Guide for Conversation between Counselors and Students:

Using the Right Fit Quiz as a resource, start a conversation with students who are applying to and deciding which college to attend about what might be a “right fit” school for them. Some of these comments and guidelines may seem obvious to some counselors, but we hope they are a helpful addition to many counselors’ regular routines.

GENERAL CONVERSATION GUIDELINES:

- **Approach this as a collaborative process.** You probably have a lot of opinions about what kind of school (or even which specific school) a particular student should attend. Try not to let these opinions become too apparent during the conversation but rather allow the student to express what he or she is looking for and then build off of that.
- **Be sensitive to family and other pressures that might influence school choice.** You might start the conversation by asking what the student is looking for in a school and find that the student is fixated on a particular school or set of schools as a result of pressure from family members and/or peers. Try to be sensitive to this pressure. If a student is really stuck on a school because of these pressures, try a thought exercise and ask them a more general question such as “When you think about a good experience at college, what comes to mind?” or “What features of a college are most important to you?”
- **Be prepared to explain what “fit” is and why it’s important.** To some, the concept of “fit” might be foreign, especially thinking about “fit” in non-academic terms. You will need to explain that there are various aspects to life on campus beyond academic factors and that thriving at college has a lot to do with a sense of connectedness and belonging on campus. This means it will be important for the student to understand some of his/her preferences and/or attitudes around a variety of aspects of campus life, including:
 - ✓ School size
 - ✓ Prevalence of Greek life on campus
 - ✓ Activities and extracurriculars of interest
 - ✓ Diversity of the student population

- ✓ Housing options (on-campus, off-campus, alcohol-free dorms, quiet halls, availability of single rooms, etc.)
- ✓ What percentage of students commute vs. live on campus
- ✓ What percentage of students are local vs. from different regions
- ✓ Religious activities and affiliations
- ✓ Rural versus urban environments
- ✓ General social scene and degree of “party” culture
- ✓ Cultural and social identities represented on campus
- ✓ School’s approach or commitment to wellness of the student body
- ✓ Resources for first-generation students on campus
- ✓ Resources for LGBTQ+ populations on campus
- ✓ Resources and support for students with learning differences

The student will also need to understand his or her particular needs with regard to medical care and other kinds of support and what kinds of resources are available both on and off campus. It’s best to have a general discussion about the student’s interests and preferences and then to guide him or her toward some of the research questions he or she might need to do about the schools he or she is considering.

- **Help conduct research in real time.** If you can devote some of your session to actively researching some of the questions about the student life on campus that you and the student have, that is ideal. Although you will most likely not be able to get through all of the questions and research in one sitting, it is a good idea to get the student started to give him or her a sense of how to do this research, including how to navigate an educational institution’s website. Then you can ask the student to research remaining questions at home and come back to have an additional discussion about the results.

FOLLOW-UP & PREPARING FOR THE NEXT CONVERSATION:

- Counselors should arrange to have a follow-up conversation with students about investigating school fit and completing the right fit worksheet for the different schools the student is considering most seriously.
- Counselors should set clear agendas for the follow-up session at the end of the first session, asking students to do the following:
 - Do additional research on schools based on the questions that were generated during the first session
 - Take the Right Fit Quiz for all schools under serious consideration
- Spend the follow-up session reviewing progress on research and quizzes and discussing any barriers to completing these and/or having relevant conversations with trusted adults or peers

Right Fit Quiz:

The Right Fit Quiz is a resource that was developed by The Jed Foundation to encourage students to think more broadly about the overall “fit” of a school in their school selection and decision process. The quiz helps students come up with a “fit” score for each school they are interested in based on a number of factors, all of which together comprise the concept of “right fit.” The quiz can be accessed [here](#). We recommend that school counselors direct students to the quiz and review results alongside students to aid in their college decision-making processes.

Section 2B: Resources for Student Anxiety and Stress Relief

Applying to college can be a stressful process. In this section, we’re providing a few resources and suggestions for mindfulness exercises to do in the classroom or as part of school assemblies. These kinds of exercises can be especially helpful to seniors as they go through the college application and decision process.

What is Mindfulness?

Mindfulness means paying attention to the present. When you’re mindful, you let yourself experience your sensations, thoughts and feelings without judging them as good or bad. Mindfulness keeps you engaged with the present and helps you “go with the flow” of life without complicating each experience with information from the past or judgmental thoughts from within yourself.

When you apply mindfulness to your daily life, you can expect to fully experience the emotions within you – including the emotions that sometimes challenge us in life. It takes practice, but mindfulness can help you to notice, experience, and sit with life’s challenging moments while maintaining inner peace and personal well-being.

Developing moment-to-moment awareness of your experience without judgment doesn’t always come naturally. Many schools, colleges, counseling services and community centers offer classes and workshops that teach mindfulness. There are also many great apps you can use on your phone or websites to go to start to learn some techniques. This section outlines some mindfulness resources that school staff can use with students. It also contains some instructions for how to hold a mindfulness workshop either as part of a class or in an assembly at school. Suggested websites and apps to start with are below.

APPS:

- **Headspace:** A mindfulness app with hundreds of meditations, with everything from stress to sleep. A “Basics” course is free but users must subscribe for access to meditation exercises outside of that.
- **Calm:** An app that includes guided meditations and Sleep Stories to help reduce anxiety, lower stress and sleep better. Includes a combination of free and fee-based meditations.
- **Stop, Breathe and Think:** A friendly app to guide people through meditations for mindfulness and compassion. The app is free but includes some in-app purchases.
- **Buddhify:** A meditation and mindfulness app designed to fit busy lifestyles. The app costs \$4.99 to purchase.
- **Insight Timer:** Home to more than 5M meditators, Insight Timer is rated as the top free meditation app on the Android and iOS stores.
- **Mindfi:** Mindfulness designed for people with busy schedules. Available for free with some in-app purchases.

WEBSITES:

Mindful Schools

www.mindfulschools.org

Through courses and curricula, Mindful Schools offers educators practical skills for self-care, facilitation, and connecting with youth, providing simple, effective mindfulness practices that can be integrated into the school day and adapted for diverse environments.

Mindful

www.mindful.org

Mindful is a non-profit dedicated to inspiring, guiding, and connecting anyone who wants to explore mindfulness. Mindful offers personal stories, practical advice, and insights that speak to anyone from novice meditators looking for guidance to corporate managers exploring new ways to cultivate workplace engagement and fulfillment.

Press Pause

www.presspause.org

In collaboration with Half of Us of MTV, JED has created the Press Pause website. You can use this website and the videos to create lessons or workshops on introducing mindfulness for students.

SAMPLE CLASS OR ASSEMBLY EXERCISE:

- Start with an “arriving into the space” breathing exercise.
 - Instruct students to take 1 minute to notice their breath and settle into the space around them.

- Introduce the concept of mindfulness
 - What it is, what are the benefits, why is this relevant to them. You can use information from the above paragraphs on mindfulness to help you explain what it is and how it can help students.
- Show one of the Press Pause videos- for example you can start with this one, which talks about feeling overwhelmed- <https://youtu.be/GatKaBMw0BM>
 - Have students spend a minute reflecting after the video ends and have them jot down two or three things that they feel or have felt overwhelmed about. Some suggested questions can be:
 - ✓ Any initial thoughts or feelings after watching the video?
 - ✓ Can you relate to any of this?
 - ✓ How does this play out in your life?
 - ✓ What is one tip you took away from the video?
- Go over the ways students can “Press Pause.”
 - Some ideas here can be:
 - ✓ Create a gratitude journal
 - ✓ Create times where you unplug
 - ✓ Practice breathing and meditation
 - ✓ Practice kindness to yourself and others
- Consider giving students homework of starting a gratitude list/journal during the next week. You can also assign for them to try some meditation in the Calm or Headspace app and to write down in a journal how they felt after.

Section 3:

Supporting Students During the Transition to College

This section gives schools some tools to start discussions with graduating students and families about mental health, emotional well-being, and the transition out of high school and to college.

Section 3A includes sample communications and resources that schools can send to college-bound students and their families. This section includes links to a resource co-developed with the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) as well as a template for communications to send to students and families along with the resource.

Section 3A also includes a sample communication to students and families about privacy laws and information sharing both on college campuses and more generally after a student turns 18. Many students and families are unaware of changes in privacy and information sharing laws that come about when a student turns 18, and there may sometimes be misunderstandings about what medical, health, and academic information will be shared with families both in college and in general after a student turns 18. This section contains a template for communicating with families of graduating students about these changes as well as a fact sheet. Although some of the materials in these communications and fact sheets are specific to the college-attending population, we recommend distributing these resources to all graduating students and their families, regardless of plans for post-secondary education, because they will be useful to all students leaving high school and transitioning to adult life.

Section 3B contains slides and handouts for a student session on mental health during the transition to college. This presentation can be facilitated as part of a class or an assembly, preferably by a school counselor, college counselor, school psychologist, school social worker, or equivalent. This section contains slides, handouts, and a facilitator guide and script for the presenter.

Section 3C contains slides and handouts for a joint student and family session on mental health during the transition to college. This may be presented as an after-school evening event for graduating students and their families to attend together. This is a presentation that can be facilitated by a school counselor, college counselor, school psychologist, school social worker, or equivalent. This section contains slides, handouts, and a facilitator guide and script for the presenter.

Section 3A: Starting the Conversation: College and Your Mental Health

JED and the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) collaborated to produce a guide for students transitioning to college and their families about mental health in college. The resource includes helpful guidance on recognizing signs of emotional struggles in college students, resources available on college campuses, as well as information about privacy laws that come into effect when students turn 18 and a universal waiver form to allow more communication between campuses and designated trusted adults. We recommend providing this guide to all graduating seniors and their families. Below is a sample communication to students and families to accompany the guide.

Sample Communication to Students:

Directions: Provide this communication as a letter or email to graduating seniors along with the JED-NAMI “Starting the Conversation: College and Your Mental Health” Guide, available for download [here](#).

Dear Seniors:

Congratulations on your upcoming graduation! We are so excited for all your accomplishments and look forward to celebrating with you.

As you turn your attention to what comes next, we would like to draw your attention to an important topic and enclosed resource, “Starting the Conversation: College and Your Mental Health.” This guide was developed by experts from The Jed Foundation (JED) and the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI).

The transition from high school to college is exciting but may also be stressful and some students may experience heightened distress during this period. Because as many as one in five college students experiences a mental health issue (e.g. depression, anxiety, etc.), we encourage you to become informed about what mental health issues might look like in college and what resources are available on college campuses, even if you do not or have never dealt with a mental health issue in the past. For students, this information is essential to understand in case you or a friend or classmate is struggling. For families, this guide will help you be prepared in case a family member or friend of the family exhibits signs of serious emotional distress while in college.

We hope that you will review and discuss this important resource. Best of luck as you prepare for graduation and the upcoming transition, and we wish you all the best during this exciting time!

Sample Communication to Families about Privacy Laws

When students turn 18, family members' access to their information changes. It is important to educate families about these changes and to encourage them to educate themselves about how their student's college campus manages sharing information. We recommend sending the below communication and fact sheet to students graduating from high school and their families.

Directions: *Provide this communication as a letter or email to graduating seniors and their families along with the attached fact sheet.*

Dear Seniors and Families:

Congratulations on your upcoming graduation! We are so excited for all your accomplishments and look forward to celebrating with you.

As you turn your attention to what comes next, we would like to draw your attention to an important topic about information sharing on college campuses and family access to students' academic and medical information once students turn 18. We recommend reviewing the attached fact sheet. If you are planning on attending college next year and know where you are going, we recommend using the fact sheet to investigate how your particular school manages privacy and information sharing. Students and families are encouraged to have a discussion about what information they want to share and under what circumstances to help determine if they need more information from the school and/or if waivers should be signed.

We hope that you will review and discuss this important resource. Best of luck as you prepare for graduation and the upcoming transition and we wish you all the best during this exciting time!

College Privacy & Information Sharing Fact Sheet

What rights do parents lose when their child turns 18?

It's important to understand the changes that occur when your child turns 18 and legally becomes an adult. Even if your child is still living under your roof and is financially dependent on you, parents still lose some of their rights to be automatically included in certain aspects of their children's life. It is a good idea to talk with your child before they leave for college about how these changes could impact both their life and yours.

There are various options that allow different levels of access to your child's private medical and/or academic records. It would be a good idea to talk about what would be in your family's best interest before your child leaves for college so that your family can all be on the same page and come up with what you all think is in the best interest of everyone.

MEDICAL:

- Based on The Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) all medical records become private, even to parents, once the child turns 18
- This is the case for any medical professional your child is working with, including psychologists, therapists, primary care clinicians, specialists, etc.
- In order to get access or be involved in your child's care, they must sign waivers for each separate care provider to grant you access. A universal waiver can be accessed on pages 23-24 of [this resource](#).
- This is also the case for any medical care that is provided on their college campus
 - To learn more about your child's specific school policies it is a good idea to explore the school website and find the page outlining student privacy policy.
 - You can usually find this information in the "Campus Health" section of the school's website. Look for tabs that say something like "Privacy and confidentiality of health records."

EDUCATION:

- While you may be used to your child's school contacting you if there are any concerns or challenges regarding your child, this is unlikely to be the case in college. If your child is struggling academically or facing disciplinary action, it is not the responsibility of the university to notify you as the parents.
- The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) provides protection for students of all ages to keep their academic records confidential. Contact or research your child's school to find out what their existing policies look like and what information you can get access to as a parent.
 - This can typically be found in the registrar's office section of the website; look for tabs that say "resources and services" or "student privacy."
 - Some schools may allow your child to sign a waiver and grant you access to their private academic information, but they will likely need to seek this out on their own.
 - These waivers and forms can also be found under the student privacy and FERPA forms tabs.
 - Schools will often *only* reach out to the parents if there is an emergency situation with their child
 - "Under FERPA, an institution is permitted to disclose non-directory information that is necessary to resolve a crisis or emergency situation and/or in order to protect the health/safety of student(s)/individual(s)."

Section 3B: Student session on mental health and the transition to college

Before students graduate from high school, it's a good idea to have at least one session with all graduating seniors to ensure they have a basic grasp on emotional issues that might come up during the transition to college and how to seek help on a college campus. The session can also be used for broader discussions about how to feel socially connected in college, how to cope with new stressors in the college environment, and how to know if a friend is struggling with mental health issues. Orientation and student affairs professionals have noted that holding these sessions with students prior to graduation is extremely helpful and results in students who arrive at orientation much better prepared to navigate their new, complex environment.

Depending on the particular situation at your school, this session can be done as part of a class or part of a special senior in-school assembly if class time is not available. It is best if you can allot at least 90 minutes to this activity, which you can spread out across two sessions if necessary.

Learning Objectives:

After this session, students should be able to:

- Identify common warning signs of emotional distress in themselves and peers
- List at least 2-3 college campus resources to access in case of an emergency or if they are concerned about their own or a peer's emotional well-being
- Provide basic information about health and mental health services (e.g. location, hours, how to make an appointment) available on their college campus

Ideal timing:

This session can be done in the spring of senior year. It is helpful but not absolutely necessary if students know which school they are attending.

Planning considerations:

If possible, plan to have an adult moderator available for each break-out activity. When these activities are done with the entire senior class, plan to have a small group of school staff available for the session. The session works particularly well if followed up by a session with the senior class and their parents or guardians. It is ideal but not absolutely necessary if students have access to laptops during the session to look up information about their school.

Download powerpoint, handout, and facilitator script for the student session [here](#).

Remember, this is just an example. You should feel free to adapt and modify as appropriate for your school.

Section 3C: College Transition Night with Families

You may also choose to hold an evening event with parents/caregivers and students to discuss the transition to college. This can be especially useful in getting parents and students to start important conversations and learn together about what they need to do to prepare for the transition.

Download powerpoint, handout, and facilitator script for the parent session [here](#).

Section 4:

Special Considerations and Students at Risk

This section discusses special considerations for the transition to college. When having discussions with students about college and life after high school, it's important for counselors to understand which students may be struggling with mental health issues or are at higher risk for struggling emotionally during the transition, even if they are not currently in treatment.

Section 4A discusses how to identify students who may be at higher risk for emotional health issues during the transition. We recommend distributing this to all counselors, school psychologists, and other school support staff.

Section 4B provides guidelines for counselors, school psychologists, and other school support staff on how to talk to those students at risk to help them take steps to manage their emotional health and have a plan in case problems emerge or re-emerge after high school. It also provides tools that counselors and students can use together to help the student have a plan for a smoother transition.

Section 4C deals more specifically with students with an identified mental health condition who are transitioning to college. For students with a mental health condition, transitioning to college can be particularly stressful. Figuring out how to transition mental healthcare, especially if the student is moving away from home, can be daunting. This section contains a guide for conversations between counselors and students with pre-identified mental health issues; a guide for conversations between counselors and families of students with pre-identified mental health issues; and checklists and worksheets for students and families to complete with the help of counselors in order to make a reliable transition of care plan. We recommend distributing this section to all counselors, school psychologists, and other school support staff and encouraging them to work through the worksheets and checklists with students and their families.

Finally, Section 4D deals with special considerations for students with disabilities who are transitioning to college. In many high schools, students with disabilities will have a specialized transition plan for moving from high school to college. The transition can be especially challenging for students in this population because they are suddenly required to take much more ownership of their accommodations than they were in high school.

Different colleges and universities have different processes for obtaining accommodations and the system can be a bit confusing and difficult to navigate. High school personnel can help students plan for this to ensure they are able to get the accommodations they need in college and that they are able to advocate for themselves. In this section, you will find a series of checklists and worksheets that should be distributed to all students with disabilities who will be seeking accommodations in college. School counselors who are aiding students in this transition should work through these checklists and worksheets with students and ensure they are able to complete all the associated tasks. This might require several follow-ups. We recommend that you distribute this section to all school counselors, school psychologists, and other school support staff and suggest that they work with students with disabilities on the associated worksheets.

Section 4A: Identifying Students at Risk During the Transition

Which students might be at greater risk for emotional distress during the transition out of high school?

Research suggests that students with the following backgrounds may be most at risk for higher levels of stress and difficulty adjusting to college and life after high school:

- ✓ Students with a history of mental health and/or substance abuse issues
- ✓ Students who struggled with other transitions, such as the transition to high school
- ✓ Students with disabilities
- ✓ First-generation college students

It may also be worth checking in on students who experienced a great deal of anxiety and stress about the college application and decision process to make sure they are feeling okay about the transition and provide any additional needed support. In the case of students with a history of mental health issues, you'll want to ask them about a transition of care plan (more on this in section 4C). For students with disabilities, you'll want to ensure that they have a plan for accommodations on campus. You should ask all students how they managed their transition into high school or any other major transitions, like changing schools or moving. You should also ask all parents and guardians about this. For students going away for college, you may want to find out how they have handled being away from home in the past on shorter trips, including summer camp and even sleepovers. Struggling with these shorter trips away from home may signal larger potential separation issues.

Section 4B: Talking to Students at Risk about Mental Health During the Transition

Guide for Conversation between Counselors and Students

- Start by asking all students how they are feeling about the upcoming transition. Ask if they have any specific concerns. Listen to their concerns and recognize that the transition is difficult for many people and that there are a lot of resources and people to support them. Validating their concerns is also key here, recognizing that transitions are difficult for many people and that this can be a particularly big transition.
- Ask students if they remember another transition they made - maybe it was into high school or from a different school. Ask them to describe how the transition made them feel, what were some things that surprised them, what was easier than they thought, what was harder than they thought, and what they did for support. You can suggest that students think ahead about what kinds of support they might need in the transition to college and whether any of the support resources they used in past transitions would be helpful in this one as well.
- Ask students if they have ever struggled with a trip away from home in the past, whether for summer camp, sleepovers, or other short separations. Ask them to describe how the separation made them feel and what they did for support or what may have made them feel better.
- If a student expresses having had a hard time with a transition in the past, you may suggest that they discuss this with peers, parents/guardians, or another trusted adult. Ask them how they handled some of the difficulties that came up in the transition. Ask if there are things they wish they had done before the transition to make it easier and suggest that they set up some of these elements in advance of the college transition as well.
- If the student has a disability, see Section 4D.
- If the student has a history of mental health issues, talk to them about researching counseling services on campus (see Section 4C, “Researching College Mental Health Resources Checklist”). Ask the student “Are there specific ways you think I can be helpful in your transition to college? Do you have any specific questions about the transition and/or about finding mental health resources on campus?” If the student is currently in therapy, you might also ask: “What plans, if any, do you already have around continuing your mental healthcare in college? Do you intend to continue therapy and have you identified someone to work with once you’re in college?” Have an open-ended discussion. Before having this conversation, it is recommended that you become conversant in our [Transition of Care Guide](#).

- Follow up with students on their feelings about the transition and their self-care plan in the following few weeks. During the follow-up session, talk about what the first few weeks at college might look like. Encourage students to have open conversations with parents, guardians, and/or other trusted adults before they leave about communication plans and how they can be most helpful to the student during the transition.

Section 4C: Transition of Health and Mental Health Care

Guide for Conversation between Counselors and Students

Using the Transition of Care Guide as a resource, start a conversation with a student who has a mental or physical health condition about his or her plans to transition care after leaving high school. If you're not sure about a student's physical or mental health status but still want to initiate this conversation, you can start by saying "I don't know if you've ever had any health or mental health issues but if you have, here are some things to consider."

GENERAL CONVERSATION GUIDELINES:

- **Approach this as a collaborative process.** Do not assume that the student has done extensive research or planning around this, as most probably have not.
- **Help the student research in real time.** You should plan on using at least part of the session to help the student research mental health services available to him or her after high school. It is most effective if you can look into various options together. Help the student by modeling the research process for them, especially how to look for and evaluate information.

IF THE STUDENT IS APPLYING TO / DECIDING ON WHERE TO ATTEND COLLEGE:

- Start the conversation by checking in on how the student is feeling about the college application / decision process. Is he or she stressed or anxious about anything? How is the process going and what concerns does the student have? Listen and address anything you feel you can address.
- If you know that the student has a regular therapist, ask if he/she has discussed plans for mental health care on campus.
- Ask the student if he/she has been looking into mental health resources on campus visits or seeking this information out from schools in any other way. If he/she has, ask him/her whether this information has been helpful and how he/she has been using it in his/her considerations of where to apply / attend. If not, ask why not. If the

student gives a curt reply like “I don’t know” or “I don’t feel like it,” try to probe a little more. For example, “can you think of any reasons why it might be helpful to look into mental health resources?” or “Are there any reasons you can think of why you might not want to look into mental health resources on campus?”

- Common concerns about seeking information about mental health resources on campus might be around confidentiality, fear of hurting chances of being admitted if one is “exposed” as having a mental health condition, or the sense that college should be a “fresh start” and the student won’t need mental health services. Try to address these concerns by suggesting ways the student can seek information anonymously, reassuring them that their information will not be shared with the admissions office, and suggesting they look into mental health resources “just in case.”
- Give the student the “[Transition of Care Guide](#)” and the “Researching College Mental Health Resources Checklist” (see below). Ask the student to read the guide and go through the checklist with the schools he or she is most interested in. Suggest that the student have a conversation with both his or her current provider and his or her parents or guardians about both the guide and the checklist.
- If possible, start one of the checklists together in your office and answer any questions that come up along the way.
- Schedule a follow-up within the next 2 weeks if possible to discuss the results of the checklist research and conversations with both parents and providers.

IF THE STUDENT KNOWS WHERE HE/SHE IS ATTENDING COLLEGE:

- Congratulate the student on his / her acceptance and decision. Ask what he or she is most excited about and what he/she is most nervous about regarding the transition to college.
- Ask the student if he/she has thought about what will happen to his/her current mental health care after leaving high school. If he/she has thought about it, ask if he/she has had any conversations with his/her provider and/or family about it and what decisions have been made. Find out if he/she has any questions or concerns about decisions that have been made already.
- Ask the student “Are there specific ways you think I can be helpful in your transition to college? Do you have any specific questions about the transition and/or about finding mental health resources on campus?” Have an open-ended discussion.
- If the student has no ideas or does not think you can be helpful, start making a few suggestions. Remind the student that you are there to support him/her and help him/her make a smooth and healthy transition and that you would like to help. Tell him/her that students in the past have found it helpful to have a concrete transition plan.
- Provide the “Transition of Care Guide” and the “Transition of Care Plan Worksheet” to the student. Suggest that the student and his/her parents or guardians read the guide together and bring it to the student’s regular provider.

FOLLOW-UP & PREPARING FOR THE NEXT CONVERSATION:

- Counselors should arrange to have a follow-up conversation with students about investigating mental health resources on campus, talking to parents and current provider(s) about transitioning care, and completing the checklist and transition of care plan worksheet.
- Counselors should set clear agendas for the follow-up session at the end of the first session, asking students to do the following:
 - ✓ Use the checklist to investigate mental health resources on campus (if applying or deciding)
 - ✓ Read the Transition of Care Guide
 - ✓ Have at least one conversation with parents and provider(s) about transitioning care
 - ✓ Share Transition of Care Worksheet with students and families
- Discuss any concerns the student may have about the transition of care plan and/or resources on campus. If the student is in the process of deciding which college to attend, gently encourage him or her to take the information gathered about mental health resources into account when making the decision and encourage more discussion with parents and/or providers to determine considerations for the best decision.

Researching College Mental Health Resources Checklist*:

Directions: Counselors should encourage students with a mental health condition who are applying to college to look into the items on this checklist before applying to a school. Some of these questions may be found on the website but others may require a call to the school to determine the answer. The counselor should encourage the student to make these calls on his or her own, with the help of a parent, or together with the counselor. The counselor should plan a follow-up with the student to debrief on what he or she has found out about the different schools to which he/she is thinking of applying.

CHECKLIST ITEMS:

1. Does the college / university have a counseling center?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
2. Is there access to a psychiatric medication prescriber / management on campus?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
3. Are there clinical services available outside of regular “business hours”?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No

4. Does the campus have mental health services available after hours / for crises/ emergencies? Check all that apply.
 - a. *Yes, the school has on-campus after-hours / emergency services.*
 - b. *The school promotes a community resource or hotline for after-hours emergencies.*
 - c. *The school promotes a national hotline / text service for after-hours crises/emergencies.*
 - d. *Other*

5. Does the school counseling center have any of the following longer-term care mechanisms in place? Select all that apply.
 - a. *Linkages to community providers*
 - b. *Unlimited number of counseling sessions*
 - c. *An updated list of available community providers*
 - d. *Information about insurance plans*
 - e. *None of the above*

6. Are there clinicians at school or in the community that accept my health insurance?
 - a. *Yes*
 - b. *No*

***Note on Checklist Results:** College mental health resources and services may come in many different shapes and sizes. This checklist is not meant to be a definitive or comprehensive assessment of a school’s mental health services. There is no one question here that would be a “deal-breaker” for the school, and it is important that the student not panic if he or she is attending a school that does not offer all of the services listed in this checklist. The most important thing is to ensure that the student, with the help of current providers, counselors, family members, and other trusted adults, is able to assess what services he or she needs most and that the school is able to provide those. It is also important for the student to be able to understand *in advance* what gaps there might be in services offered on campus so that he or she can make a suitable plan to obtain these services elsewhere. It is often easiest and cheapest for students to be able to access most needed services on campus. However, in many cases, not all services are available on campus. This does not necessarily mean that the student cannot attend that school. Nonetheless, if it is the case that the school relies on community providers for a lot of services, you will want to look for signs that there are strong linkages between the on-campus counseling center and off-campus providers. Maintaining an updated list of community providers, updated information about insurance plans accepted by those providers, and, even better, having memoranda of understanding in place with community providers are all good signs that there are some linkages between community providers and on-campus counseling. It is also a good general signal of commitment to mental health and wellness if the campus offers after-hours emergency services for mental health and if information about mental health and wellness services is relatively easy to find on the school’s website.

Researching College Student Health Resources Checklist:

Directions: Counselors should encourage students who are applying to college to look into the items on this checklist before applying to a school. Some of these questions may be found on the website but others may require a call to the school to determine the answer.

CHECKLIST ITEMS:

1. Does the college/university have a student health center?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
2. Are services at the Health Center free for students?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. Some are but there are fees for others (such as specialty services)
3. Will you be able to continue insurance coverage through a parent/caregiver's healthcare plan?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
4. Will this plan cover any fees for care at the campus Health and Counseling Services?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
5. If you have an existing medical problem that cannot be managed at the campus health service, will your insurance cover necessary care in the community? (Note that some health insurance plans cover only emergency care out of state)
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. N/A
6. Does the college/university offer health insurance for those who do not have access to family coverage or whose family plan is insufficient for local coverage at the college?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
7. If I have insurance coverage through the school, does that cover all fees for visits and procedures to the student health center if there is a charge?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
8. Does the student health center medical staff include specialists or is there a process for referral to specialists in the community when necessary?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No

9. Does the school health center have any of the following longer-term care mechanisms in place when necessary for problems they cannot manage? Select all that apply.
- a. *Linkages to community providers*
 - b. *An updated list of available community providers*
 - c. *Information about insurance plans*
 - d. *None of the above*
10. Are there clinicians in the community that accept my health insurance?
- a. *Yes*
 - b. *No*
11. Is there access to medication/pharmacy as part of the Student Health Center or in reasonable proximity to residence halls/campus?
- a. *Yes*
 - b. *No*

Transition of Care Plan Worksheet:

Directions: Counselors, current providers, and/or school psychologists should distribute this worksheet to students in treatment for a mental health condition and their families and encourage them to fill this out in consultation with their clinician.

RESEARCHING CAMPUS RESOURCES

	Response	I have not researched this	Notes	Target completion date	Completion date
Does the school have a counseling center?					
Where is the counseling center?					
What are the counseling center's hours?					
Is there a cost associated with going to the counseling center?					
Is there a limit to how many sessions I can have at the counseling center?					
Does the counseling center or another on-campus entity offer after-hours or emergency help?					
Is medication management available at the counseling or health center?					
Are counseling center services available during breaks and over the summer when school is not in session?					
How do I make an appointment at the counseling center?					

TRANSITION PLANNING

	I have done this	I have not done this	Notes	Target date of completion	Date of completion
I have researched mental health resources available at my school / in my school's community					
I have considered whether or not I am close enough to home to continue treatment with my current provider					
I have considered the option of continuing with my current provider over FaceTime / other technology					
I have figured out how I will get my medication on campus					
Information about my condition has been shared with the school's counseling center					
If necessary, I have identified and been to see an off-campus provider					
If applicable, I have found feasible transportation to appointments with my off-campus provider or I have found one within walking distance					
If necessary, information about my condition has been shared between my current provider and my new off-campus provider					
If necessary, I have a plan for paying my off-campus provider and/ or submitting insurance claims					

continued on next page

If necessary, I have discussed keeping in touch with my current provider with both my current provider and my new off-campus provider							
I have a plan for continued treatment when I am home / the counseling center is closed / school is not in session							
I have developed a plan for after-hours emergencies while on campus							
I have discussed my transition plan and this worksheet with my parents or guardians							
I have discussed my transition plan and this worksheet with my current provider							
If necessary, I have discussed my transition plan and this worksheet with my new off-campus provider							

Section 4D: Special Considerations for Students with Disabilities

Worksheet for Students Seeking Accommodations for Disabilities in College

Directions: Counselors and/or school psychologists can distribute the worksheet below to students to help them build a plan for obtaining appropriate academic accommodations in college. Students should be encouraged to discuss what accommodations might be needed with family and primary clinician as well. The student and family should also be encouraged to contact the college or university disabilities office for more information and to discuss any questions the student and family might have.

What accommodations are you hoping to receive?

Do a search online for your school’s disability office and find out who you can get in touch with about accommodations. Write their name and contact information below.

Name:

Email or phone number:

What questions do you have for your school about how your accommodation will be handled?

What information do you think would be helpful to share with the office so they can best support you during your time at the school?

Obtaining appropriate academic and housing-related accommodations:

- Contact the disability office to learn about the process of requesting academic accommodations and what types of forms and information you will need to submit
- Find out if there are any deadlines you need to be aware of
- Gather and submit relevant and required documentation:
 - The results of your most recent testing done by a licensed psychologist
 - Documentation of any accommodations you received for taking the ACT or SAT
 - Any written plan used by your high school regarding your accommodations
 - Other required documentation

Important questions to ask your university disability office:

- What is the general process for getting accommodations approved?
- How recent does my testing need to have been done?
- Can you give me an idea of the protocol surrounding working with my professors to make sure I get my accommodations?

Steps for working with professors to get your accommodations:

- Find out what the protocol is for informing your professors of what you will need
- Set up a meeting with each professor to talk to them outside of class about what your accommodations are that apply to their class
- Ask them if they have preferences about how they would like to handle the accommodations in their class
- Check in the week before you plan on using any accommodations to make sure there is a plan in place for what you need
- If a professor is preventing you from using your accommodations try to meet with them during office hours when they have time to talk to you
- If a professor is still resistant you should reach out to the disability services office

Tips:

- Make a plan with your parents about how they can support you while you're away
- If you face any issues or pushback with your accommodation it will be helpful to talk to someone in the disability services office to get help and if you need more help talk to your parents about what you need
- Talk to your friends about how they can help support you

Section 5:

JED Services and Resources for High Schools

Thank you for your interest in this toolkit. The Jed Foundation (JED) works with high schools in a variety of ways. Please see below for other services and resources we offer schools. For more information, contact us at info@jedfoundation.org.

Section 5A: Set to Go Website

This toolkit draws heavily from our comprehensive web resource, Set to Go (www.settogo.org). Set to Go was designed to help high school students prepare emotionally for the transition out of high school. The site includes a broad array of helpful information on putting college into perspective, social and emotional skills, mental health and substance abuse, and the transition to college. The site has different sections dedicated to students, families, and educators. The [“tools” section](#) of the website provides PDF downloads of the main resources developed as part of this program, including some background research conducted by The Jed Foundation, a guide on college and mental health for students and their families, developed with NAMI, a Transition of Care Guide for students with diagnosed mental health conditions, a summer checklist for students transitioning to college, and other web resources and videos developed as part of a partnership with WebMD.

To stay up to date on Set to Go news and development of new resources and services, please sign up at settogo.org/email.

Section 5B: Advising and Consultation

JED subject matter experts in adolescent suicide prevention and mental health are also available for advising and consultation in individual schools or school districts. Our expert staff can work with your school or district on a consultation basis on a variety of topics and specific concerns, including creating and implementing a suicide prevention strategy at your school, providing technical assistance on mental health and suicide prevention strategies at your school, improving mental health services and supports in your particular

school or school district, responding to a suicide at school, among other topics. If you would like expert consultation with one of our subject matter experts, please contact us at info@jedfoundation.org with a brief description of the services you are looking to procure.

Section 5C: Other JED Resources and Campaigns

- Seize the Awkward (<https://seizetheawkward.org/>)
- Half of Us (<http://www.halfofus.com/>)
- Press Pause (<http://www.halfofus.com/presspause/>)
- Love is Louder (<http://loveislouder.com/>)
- JED Campus (<https://www.jedcampus.org/>)
- JED's Mental Health Resource Center (<https://www.jedfoundation.org/mental-health-resource-center/>)
- ULifeline (<http://www.ulifeline.org/>)

Section 6:

Recommended Resources

→ Selecting a College:

- [Naviance](#)
- [National Survey of Student Engagement](#)
- [Campus Explorer](#)
- [Challenge Success Whitepaper on College Fit](#)

→ General Transition to College:

- [Huffington Post Series on College Transition](#)
- [Seattle University Student Transition Resource](#)
- [Wentworth Institute of Technology Student Affairs Podcast](#)

→ FERPA and Privacy Laws:

- [FERPA Guide](#)
- [Student Data Privacy Communications Toolkit](#)
- [FERPA Sherpa Parents' Guide](#)
- [FERPA Sherpa Resources](#)
- [FERPA Sherpa Students' Guide](#)

→ Transitioning to College with a Disability:

- [Understood](#)
- [McLean College Mental Health Program](#)
- [UMass Amherst Transition of Care Guide](#)
- [Transition of Students with Disabilities to Postsecondary Education: A Guide for High School Educators](#)