
Navigating Mental and Chronic Health Conditions

Common Challenges

The transition into higher education for students is difficult enough as it is. Adding mental and chronic health conditions can make the transition harder to navigate. As students enter a season of independence, finding medical care in the area can be difficult, and most students prefer to wait until they return home for breaks to see their regular providers. This delay in care can have significant effects on their academic demands. Mental and chronic health conditions can cause invisible or fluctuating conditions that can often be dismissed by educators and peers and could be deemed as laziness. Oftentimes, students have a hesitancy to talk with parents, peers, or faculty/staff about their ongoing symptoms and conditions. Mental and chronic illness can also have an emotional strain on students and can affect self-image, relationships, and resilience. A [Mayo Clinic study](#) shows that depression rates among college students are high. 44% of students report having depressive symptoms while 15% have seriously considered suicide in the past year.

Flaring conditions

Students who experience flaring conditions may not feel ready to communicate with their professor about potentially having to miss class, even when encouraged to do so.

Field trips

Students with chronic conditions may need extra support while on field trips as they will not be in their normal environment and could possibly be without self managing tools. Plan ahead for how field trips are being organized and make sure there are ample opportunities for students to take a seat, use the bathroom, stand and stretch time, areas to separate/decompress, etc.





Supportive Strategies

Dr. Brooklynn Raney, Founder of One Trusted Adult, has a research-based philosophy that if a student has **just one trusted adult on campus**, they are significantly more likely to have a successful college experience.

- **Referrals!** - Be prompt, don't wait. See the CC Student Support page for robust information on where to refer and how to help.
- Respond **promptly** to students
- Believe people
- **Set clear expectations**
 - Don't be vague; Instead of "I am happy to support you", try "If you need to miss class today, please get notes from a friend and check in with me before class tomorrow"
- Submit a **CARE Report** if you see a student struggling or are concerned
- Flexibility isn't always helpful
 - Be flexible when possible, but it's not always reasonable if the work or absences start snowballing
 - Students who have lots of missed or multiple incomplete often cannot catch up, resulting in larger consequences.

One Trusted Adult

EVERY YOUNG PERSON *NEEDS ONE* - AND EVERY ADULT CAN BE *ONE*