

OFF TO COLLEGE: ASSESSING POTENTIAL COLLEGE MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

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In a recent audit of mental health care at U.S. colleges and universities, it was revealed that the nation's top schools are reporting an increase in students needing or accessing mental health services. Students may initially seek crisis services due to homesickness, depression, stress, inability to sleep, or problems in interpersonal relationships. The prevalence of drinking and the loosening of parental controls may cause parents to be appropriately concerned. However, anxiety or depression concerns can short-circuit a student's promising academic career, if not appropriately addressed and can create a sense of failure and lack of confidence at this delicate juncture of the student's life. Parents may feel helpless to intervene from a distance, and problems with the student may worsen if the college does not offer adequate mental health care or the student is repeatedly frustrated in how to access it.

The Anxiety Disorder Association of America has compiled their results of its study and it is available on their website:

<http://www.adaa.org/Bookstore/Publications/ADAA%20Report%20-%20FINAL%20embargoed.pdf>

The Association also offers a useful questionnaire about the availability of a college's mental health services, especially if you have a high school junior or senior looking at colleges. If your child has a history of anxiety problems or depression, you as a parent will feel more comfortable launching them off to college knowing that there will be a "safety net" for them should problems arise. You can find this questionnaire in the Appendix C of the above audit. You might want to ask some of these questions yourself when you go to visit the college.

As always, children of employees are eligible to receive free EAP services for college stress, depression, anxiety, etc. whether here at the Lab (call X4567 for an appointment), in your local community (call 1-877-622-4327) for a participating therapist in the Cigna EAP network of providers, or if they are attending college out of town, they can still access a Cigna EAP provider in the extensive network that Cigna provides (call 1-877-622-4327 with the zip code of your child's college town). Always remember that this free EAP benefit through Cigna is available to you and your family members (on your insurance plan and/or living in your home) regardless of your selected health insurance plan. You do not need to be a Cigna insured to use it EAP. It is a free benefit to all employees, family members and retirees.

If you have any questions about the EAP or would like to come in to talk, call EAP at X4567.