



FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY
PANAMA CITY
Office of Student Affairs

Counseling Center

Parents

As a parent, you know that you are an important part of your student's support network. Research has shown that even though students become more autonomous during their young adult years, parents remain a primary source of health information. To this end, we want to inform you about mental health services and resources available at the Florida State University Panama City Counseling Center and let you know what you and your student can expect. Here you will find information about mental health services at Florida State University Panama City, tips for helping your student prepare for a healthy transition to college, and ways you can help your student maintain good mental health.

Supporting Your Student's Mental Health

Whether your student is transitioning from high school or has already been away from home for a while, it is not unusual to wonder what role you should play in supporting his/her mental health. Although the young adult years are a time when students build their autonomy, a robust support network is still important for good mental health. Often, the best thing to do is to offer to be available if your student needs you, and to work together to determine what you can do to be most helpful to him/her during the school year. Below are a few tips:

Familiarize yourself with local mental health resources.

We know that FSUPC students turn to their parents for reliable health information, so you will want to be informed about available resources and encourage your student to become informed as well. See our [Referral List](#) for information about mental health and substance abuse providers in this community.

Stay in contact.

Although your student should be becoming more independent and taking on more responsibility for managing his/her own mental health, it is still appropriate for you and your student to discuss how things are going. Respect your son or daughter's boundaries and work together to come up with a plan for staying in touch that feels comfortable for you both. Email can be a good way to stay connected, but it's also wise to plan for the occasional phone call. You can often sense things in your student's voice that may not come across over email.

Know how to recognize your student's mental health symptoms.

Other people are often the first ones to notice when someone may be entering the early stages of a mental health episode. Even when someone can't pinpoint an exact concern, she/he can sense that a loved one is acting "differently" or that "something is wrong." Take some time to reflect on symptoms that your student may have experienced in the past that indicated something was wrong, and give yourself permission to tell her/him if you notice any of these symptoms occurring again (whether they occur while your student is home during a break or you sense something over the phone). Have a conversation with your student in advance about how to communicate your concern in a way that will be comfortable for her/him to hear.

Don't be afraid to ask about suicide.

- Asking about suicide does not put the idea into someone's head.
- It is best to be direct and non-judgmental.
- ALL talk of suicide should be taken seriously. If you are concerned that your student is at risk for suicide, call
- See the [Jed Foundation](#) website for more tips about what to do if you are concerned that your student may be thinking about suicide.

Preparing for a healthy transition to college

We recognize that the transition to college can be an especially stressful time for both students and parents. If your student has a mental health disorder, you may be especially anxious about how he/she will handle this transition and wonder how you can support him/her. We encourage you to start talking with your student early about preparing for college and about how his/her mental health condition will be managed while at FSUPC. Below are tips for helping your student make a healthy transition.

Start planning prior to your student's arrival on campus.

Students have a lot on their minds, especially in the first few weeks of class. So it can be easy to forget about things like medication or staying healthy.

Encourage your student to make a plan for mental health and wellness.

Planning is a key component to staying healthy and succeeding in college. All too often, students wait until mental health symptoms become severe before taking action. Help your student make a customized plan to recognize mental health symptoms early, create strategies for managing potential stressors, and plan for treatment and support.

Talk to your student about staying healthy.

It can be a good idea to talk with your student about issues he/she is likely to come across, such as how to handle stress and how to make good decisions about alcohol or drug use. This can be especially important if your student is taking psychiatric medication. Make sure your student knows what medication they are taking and how alcohol or other drugs may interact. Try to remain non-judgmental, but make your expectations clear.

Create emergency contact plan.

It is important to create a "back-up" plan in case there is a time when you are unable to reach your student. It can be a good idea for you to have the contact information for someone who is likely to know how to locate your student, such as a roommate or close friend. In addition, if your student signs an **authorization to contact** form, you may also be able to have contact with his/her treating clinician for more urgent matters. We also recommend that students fill out an emergency contact card to keep in their wallet.

We recommend that you visit the Jed Foundation's website transitionyear.org for more information about supporting your student's mental health during the transition to college.