

Colleges Face a Behavioral Health Crisis

America's colleges and universities serve millions of students. Many students are in a time of transition, facing new stressors, and at higher risk of behavioral health issues, like depression and anxiety. These issues can affect students in a variety of ways, such as:

- 73% of students surveyed by the National Alliance on Mental Illness experienced a mental health crisis in college.¹
- 65% of students surveyed by NAMI who had dropped out of college did so because of a reason related to mental health.¹
- 30% regularly consumed drugs or alcohol during their first semester. They were more likely to rate their emotional health as worse than other students.²
- 27% of students ages 19 to 22 used an illicit drug within the last 30 days.³
- 9% of students ages 19 to 22 used amphetamines within the last year.³



The Role of Prevention on Campus

With all of these challenges, more colleges and universities are building robust behavioral health systems. Yet 51% of students found it difficult to get emotional support at college when they needed it.² When it comes to protecting students' health, an effective and accessible system of prevention is crucial.

Substance use on campuses can be prevented, and colleges and universities can promote mental health wellness on their campuses. Addressing the root causes of substance misuse and mental health issues improves the health outcomes of all students. In turn, this will help students do better academically, graduate, and derive more value and enjoyment out of their college experience.

A Case for Prevention in Higher Education

Improving Campus Health and Wellness

With so many students on campuses struggling with mental health and the toll its taking on them, college and university officials are uniquely positioned to improve the overall health and wellness of their students on their campus. It starts by acknowledging that a crisis in campus behavioral health exists.



Raising awareness of the issues above is a first step, but we at Prevention Action Alliance encourage you to take your prevention efforts to the next level: Implement campus-wide and evidence-based prevention programs, improve students' social and recreational options, limit the availability of substances, consistently enforce laws and policies, and create an environment of health promotion.

About Us

Prevention Action Alliance created the Ohio College Initiative to support the health and wellness professionals of Ohio's colleges and universities in their mission to provide safe, healthy campuses for their students. The Ohio College Initiative supports member colleges and universities with strategies, tools, and resources for preventing substance misuse and promoting mental health wellness.

Learn more at preventionactionalliance.org/oci.

Prevention Action Alliance



1. "[College Students Speak: A Survey Report on Mental Health](#)." National Alliance on Mental Illness.
2. "[First-Year College Experience Survey](#)." The JED Foundation, Jordan Matthew Porco Foundation, The Partnership for Drug-Free Kids.
3. John Schulenberg, et. al. "[Monitoring the Future national survey results on drug use, 1975-2018: Volume II, college students and adults ages 19-60](#)." University of Michigan.