

EMORY CAPS - GUIDE FOR PARENTS, CAREGIVERS, & FAMILIES

Welcome!

We are so glad that your student is part of Emory University, and that you have taken an active interest in supporting their mental health and well-being. At Emory's Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS), our goal is to support the academic mission of the university by fostering the intellectual, emotional, social, spiritual, and psychological well-being of Emory students. Because we know parents and families play a crucial role in this regard, we have developed this guide to support you and to provide you with additional information which might help you better support your student throughout their time at Emory.

Keep in mind, for some students, the stress of college can negatively impact their mental health, making it difficult to manage academics and/or other aspects of daily living. In fact, as many as one in five college students experiences a mental health condition while in college. As such, it is important for parents and families to take proactive steps to support their students. For one, having pre-emptive family conversations about mental health allows you to plan for what to do if your student experiences distress or a mental health condition—or if a pre-existing condition gets worse.

Here are some sample conversation starters:

- *"I know you're excited about going (back) to Emory next month, and I'm excited for you! But before school starts, I'd like to talk to you about some common struggles that can come up during college."*
- *(If relevant) "We have a family history of mental health issues and/or substance use issues. I'd like to talk to you about it and have us prepare in case anything ever comes up for you while you're in college."*

Most importantly: don't let the conversation stop there. Check in periodically throughout the school year, particularly during stressful times of the semester (such as midterms, final exams, etc.)

Providing support

If you suspect your student is struggling (based on any of the signs below or other clues), make sure to express your concern and ask them about it. You may be worried that you'll somehow make things worse by stepping in, but, in fact, students who are struggling are more likely to look to their friends or family for support than to seek professional help. If your student hasn't said anything to you yet, but you notice something is wrong, it's best to check-in.

Signs of distress

1. Feeling sad, withdrawn, or detached for more than two weeks
2. Seeing, hearing or believing things that are not real
3. Taking unnecessary risks or engaging in severe/out-of-control and/or dangerous risk-taking behaviors
4. Sleep issues – such as being unable to sleep, or sleeping excessively or having an erratic sleep schedule
5. Eating issues – such as not eating or refusing to eat, intentionally vomiting or using laxatives to lose weight
6. Regular and excessive use of drugs and/or alcohol
7. Drastic changes in mood, behavior, or personality
8. Extreme difficulty concentrating, focusing, or staying still
9. Recurrent and intense worries, unexplained panic, or fear that interferes with daily activities
10. Self-harming behaviors (such as cutting, burning, hair-pulling, or hitting), and/or **thoughts of suicide***

***If you suspect your student is having thoughts of suicide or have noticed any of the following warning signs, please refer to the IN CASE OF A CRISIS/ EMERGENCY section below.**

Suicide Warning Signs

1. Mood swings, rage, uncontrolled anger, hopelessness, feeling trapped or like they are a burden to others
2. Expressing or hinting at a desire to take their own life, hurt themselves or others, or wishing they were dead
3. Researching suicide methods/means, acquiring a gun and/or stockpiling pills
4. Isolation/withdrawal from friends, family and/or society at large
5. Giving away prized possessions or acting as if they are saying final goodbyes

Tips for good communication

For many situations, you don't have to be an expert to be able to help – you just have to be there. When approaching your student, one method you can use is the V-A-R method™, developed by Active Minds:

Validate their feelings: Let them know what they are feeling is understandable and that you believe them and are here for them. Paraphrase or repeat back to them how they're feeling or what they're going through. Rephrasing things in this way also enables you to make sure you understand them correctly ("I hear that you're feeling X, is that right?").

Appreciate their courage: Speaking up can be a challenging step — let them know it's a good one. Let them know you are glad they opened up to you and acknowledge that taking such a step isn't easy. Use this opportunity to remind them that you care for them and that they're not alone.

Refer them to additional support: Let them know help is available and refer them to the appropriate resources (like CAPS).

Here are some additional tips for approaching the conversation:

- Deal with problems as honestly and calmly as possible
- Be specific when describing any changes you have noticed with them
- Listen carefully to your student's concerns (active listening itself can provide hope and relief)
- Ask open-ended questions to help you clarify & better understand their concerns
- Be supportive – remind them (frequently) that you are available, and that you love them
- Make communication a regular activity

Lastly, try not to jump to offering solutions. You may feel tempted to provide advice and/or ideas on how they can best move forward, but it may not be the right time. Instead, focus on continuing to validate and to listen.

If your student denies having any problems or doesn't want to talk: stay in touch and check-in with them regularly, continuing to offer support and continuing to tend to your relationship. You can also try phrases like:

- *"Do you want to talk about it?" / "I'm here for you if you ever want to talk."*

In addition to communicating directly with your student, you can also relay information: CAPS may not be able to provide you with your student's records or health care information (please refer to the FAQ section below) but we can listen to your concerns and to any information you want to provide us about your student (which may be especially relevant and helpful if/when your student comes to see us).

CAPS Overview

Contact and Hours of Operation

Address: 1462 Clifton Road, Suite 235, Atlanta, GA 30322

Phone: (404) 727-7450 / Fax: (404) 727-2906

Crisis Consultation Hours: 8:30-3:30, Monday-Friday

Hours of Operation: 8:30-5:00, Monday-Friday

Services Offered

In service of our mission, CAPS offers an array of mental health services to support both individuals and the larger Emory community. CAPS provides free, confidential services for students including: initial screenings; crisis intervention; community referrals; brief individual and couples therapy; various types of groups (interpersonal process therapy groups, support, and discussion groups); consultations; community outreach and intervention services; a biofeedback/stress clinic; and educational workshops focused on stress management, skill building, and more.

Brief Therapy Model

The demand for services at CAPS is high and continues to grow. In order to meet the mental health needs of as many students as possible, CAPS operates from a brief-therapy model. Currently, this involves a general guideline to limit individual/couples counseling to 8 sessions per academic year (beyond intake/ initial screening). For students needing more support, we can connect them with additional CAPS services (such as our stress clinic, groups, and workshops), other campus resources, and/or facilitate referrals to providers in the community, including low-cost options. Emory University has also recently contracted with Timely Care, an independent company that provides Emory Student Telehealth services using a network of providers in all 50 states. This arrangement compliments the medical and mental health services already available on the Atlanta and Oxford campuses and provides a more convenient way for Emory undergraduate, graduate, and professional students to receive 24/7, no-cost medical and mental health support. CAPS clinicians can help you sort out the best options for your mental health care, including Timely Care.

IN CASE OF A CRISIS/ EMERGENCY:

Crisis triage appointments are available at CAPS Monday–Friday, 8:30-3:30. Students who are experiencing a psychological emergency can call CAPS (404-727-7450) during those times and ask to speak with the crisis counselor on-call. Members of the Emory community (family members, friends, faculty, staff & students) can also call CAPS (404-727-7450) for consultation to address their concerns about a student's well-being.

In addition, if your student is unresponsive or you think the issue is imminent and/or serious, you can also contact Emory's **Student Case Management & Intervention Services (SCMIS)** 24/7 by phone at 404-430-1120 or through their website: <https://success.emory.edu/> - if you would like a university staff member to intervene and reach out to your student.

FOR LIFE THREATENING EMERGENCIES: please call 911 or contact the Emory Police Department and Emergency Medical Services (EMS) at 404-727-6111.

Additional campus resources for crisis response and support:

- Student Case Management & Intervention Services (SCMIS): 404-430-1120 / <https://success.emory.edu/>
- Student Health Services (SHS): 404-727-7551 (press "0" for the on-call physician)
- SHS Psychiatrist-on-call: 404-778-5000 (available after hours and during the weekends)
- The Respect Program (sexual assault/interpersonal violence concerns): 404-270-5360

National crisis resources:

- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (for those in the US): 1-800-273-8255 / (En Español: 1-888-628-9454)
- Crisis Text line (for those in the US): Text HOME to 741-741 / <https://www.crisistextline.org/text-us/>
- The Trevor Project (for LGBTQ Youth in the US): 1-866-488-7386 / text START to 678-678

CAPS Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

Can I make an appointment for my student?

Because autonomy is an important part of developing a trusting relationship, we recommend students contact us themselves to learn more about their options.

What if my student is not willing to go to CAPS?

It can be really challenging to see someone you love struggling. You can remind your student that seeking help is a sign of strength and encourage them to utilize CAPS as a resource to help with their success and development. Also, your student may feel less reluctant to visit CAPS if you let them know that our services are free & confidential. In addition, you can also contact Emory's Student Case Management & Intervention Services (SCMIS) 24/7 by phone at 404-430-1120 or through their website: <https://success.emory.edu/>. SCMIS assists students and their families on an ongoing basis and in times of crisis – including but not limited to meeting academic, medical, financial, and social challenges. You can use their website to submit a "Student of Concern Referral" and they will reach out to your student and refer them to the appropriate support resources, including CAPS.

Is there a cost associated to services at CAPS?

All services offered through CAPS are free to fully registered Emory students. However, because our appointments are in high demand, we charge no-show fees for missed appointments (\$50 for initial assessments; \$30 for therapy appointments). In order to avoid a no-show fee, students must cancel at least 24-hours prior to the scheduled appointment by calling (404) 727-7450 (day or night).

What services does the Health & Wellness fee provide?

The Health & Wellness fee is an important funding supplement for Emory University's mental health services. Money generated by this fee is used across several departments (not just CAPS) to increase the availability of counseling, psychiatry, health, wellness, alcohol and other drug counseling, and crisis intervention support services for Emory students. Keep in mind: even if an individual Emory student never uses campus mental health services, these services are still critically important because they will be used by a friend, a roommate or a classmate in need of help which, in turn, has a positive impact on the larger community and the individual members who are part of it.

How long does it take to get an initial appointment?

In general, students can schedule an initial assessment appointment within a few days to a week. However, during times of peak clinical demand, it can take up to several weeks. However, we have crisis walk-in appointments available Monday-Friday, 8:30-3:30. (Please note that crisis walk-in appointments are typically brief (15-20 minute) triage appointments designed to assess the situation and determine next steps).

Can I access my student's CAPS records?

The policies of CAPS, the ethical principles of counseling professionals, and state law all agree that it is important to protect the confidentiality of clients. Students' confidential information will not be disclosed outside the Center without written authorization from the student, except when disclosures are legally permitted or required (in situations when child abuse, elder abuse or disabled adult abuse is suspected; when the therapist has reasonable cause to believe that a client presents an imminent danger to self or others; or in response to a valid subpoena or court order).

What if my student is a minor (under the age of 18)?

Under Georgia Law, if a student is under the age of 18, parent(s) must consent for them to have ongoing treatment beyond an intake/initial screening. In addition, parent(s) can request and be granted access to their student's clinical record at CAPS.

Will my student get psychotherapy at CAPS or off-campus?

All students can use CAPS as their first stop in trying to resolve whatever difficulties they are experiencing. Following an initial assessment, they will either continue with the clinician they first met, be assigned to another clinician, or receive a referral to an outside clinician or service, depending on what makes the most sense in their particular situation. CAPS uses a brief therapy model (up to 8 sessions per academic year) in order to accommodate the needs of all the students we serve. Most students who need ongoing or specialized counseling/treatment see a provider off campus. There are also many reasons why students may choose to go off-campus rather than be seen at CAPS. For example, they might feel it is more private or allows more flexibility, or they might need services that aren't available at CAPS (e.g., formal psychiatric assessment, neurological services, specialized or long-term psychotherapy, drug detoxification and treatment, inpatient services, day-treatment). Sometimes, the primary reason to see a community provider is the need to begin treatment immediately rather than wait for the next available psychotherapy opening at CAPS. If students need off-campus treatment, CAPS clinicians can help them find services that are maximally affordable, accessible, and appropriate for them. Regardless of the treatment needs, a consultation with a CAPS clinician is a good first step. Students can also call CAPS at 404-727-7450 and ask to speak with our Case Manager to request community referrals.

Should my student use Timely Care or Emory's on-campus mental health services?

Students located on the Atlanta campus are encouraged to call Counseling and Psychological Services at 404-727-7450 (<http://counseling.emory.edu/>) for mental health support. Students residing in Georgia can access telehealth initial consultations, crisis support, individual therapy, couples therapy, group therapy, and referrals for long-term or specialized treatment. All students, including those living outside of Georgia, can access a myriad of non-clinical support groups, workshops, and the stress clinic. CAPS clinicians can help you sort out the best options for your mental health care, which could include, for example, individual therapy with Timely Care and group therapy at CAPS.

Students enrolled at Oxford (whether located on campus or elsewhere in Georgia) are encouraged to call Counseling and Career Services at 770-784-8394 for individual counseling and psychiatry services. All students, regardless of location, can participate in our programming and other outreach, including our workshops, programming, or consultations with student organizations interested in promoting a supportive community at Oxford and Emory.

Regardless of location, students are eligible for Timely Care services if they are enrolled at Emory. This is especially important to keep in mind regarding Timely Care's Talk Now service, which represents an extension of support for all our students all over the world, and provides students with immediate access to a mental health professional 24/7.

How do students use their student health insurance for off-campus therapy?

Students using their Emory Student Health Insurance will need to have a referral activated in order to receive coverage. The activation can happen through CAPS or Student Health Services. Please note that students must contact CAPS or Student Health Services each year in August to reactivate the referral. More information about the plan and benefits can be found on the Student Health Services website: <https://studenthealth.emory.edu/>

Additional Campus Resources

Career Center: <http://career.emory.edu/>

Center for Women: <http://womenscenter.emory.edu/>

Office of Health Promotion: <http://healthpromotion.emory.edu/>

Office of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Life: <http://www.lgbt.emory.edu/>

Office of Spiritual and Religious Life: <http://www.religiouslife.emory.edu/>

Office of Student Conduct: <http://conduct.emory.edu/>

Office of Undergraduate Education: <http://college.emory.edu/oue/>

Residence Life and Housing Operations: <https://housing.emory.edu/>

Student Health Services: <http://studenthealth.emory.edu/>

Student Case Management & Intervention Services: <http://success.emory.edu/>

Citations & Other resources:

Active Minds - VAR Steps. <https://www.activeminds.org/about-mental-health/basic-var/var-steps/>

College Parents Matter: Tools and scripts to improve communication with your college student:
<http://collegeparentsmatter.org/index.html>

National Alliance on Mental Illness & The Jed Foundation. (August, 2016). Starting the Conversation: College and Your Mental Health. <https://www.pace.edu/counseling/parents-and-families>

Set to Go: Your guide to the transition from high school to college and adulthood: <https://www.settogo.org/>

Suicide Prevention Resource Center: What Clients and Families Need to Know:
<https://www.sprc.org/sites/default/files/Handout-WhatClientsOrFamilies.pdf>