

# ENVIRONMENTAL APPROACHES TO SUPPORTING SUCCESS OF COLLEGE STUDENTS WITH MENTAL HEALTH CONDITIONS

Presentation to the 2012 National Transition Conference  
Washington DC

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Transitions RTC

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# Acknowledgements

The Transitions RTC aims to improve the supports for youth and young adults, ages 14-30, with serious mental health conditions who are trying to successfully complete their schooling and training and move into rewarding work lives. We are located at the University of Massachusetts Medical School, Worcester, MA, Department of Psychiatry, Center for Mental Health Services Research.

Visit us at:

<http://labs.umassmed.edu/transitionsRTC/index.htm>

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# Why is supporting the mental health of students in college important?

“The most recent American College Health Association 2006 survey (94,806 students from public and private universities across the country)

- Within the past year:

94 out of 100 students reported feeling overwhelmed by all they had to do.

44 out of 100 - almost half - have felt so depressed it was difficult to function.

8 out of a 100 reported having a depressive disorder.

12 out of 100 had an anxiety disorder.

9 out of 100 or approximately 1 out of every 11 students reported having seriously considered suicide within the past year.

1.3% actually did attempt suicide.”

K. Sokol, Illinois Institute of Technology (2011)



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# Introduction

What are Environmental Approaches?:

A Social Model of Disability  
Environment in the ICF Education  
Importance for Mental Health Conditions  
Community Participation, Valued Social Roles



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# Environmental Barriers:

Stigma

Lack of supports

Uniformed campus personnel and faculty

Uninformed policy

Access to means of self-harm



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# Examples of Efforts to Address Environmental Barriers

The Modeghal Policy for Supporting College Students  
The JED Guide to Campus Mental Health  
Mental Health Rights on Campus  
The Campus Solidarity Campaign  
Active Minds  
Educational Accommodations



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# Campus MHAP: A GUIDE TO CAMPUS MENTAL HEALTH ACTION PLANNING The JED Foundation



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[www.jedfoundation.org](http://www.jedfoundation.org)

# Mission:

Launch a campus wide effort for mental health promotion and suicide prevention. Develop a widespread commitment using a public health approach.

# Activities and Strategies:

- Building Momentum
- Engage in Strategic Planning Process
- Obtain senior administrator support
- Engage stakeholders

[www.ulifeline.org](http://www.ulifeline.org)  
[www.halfofus.com](http://www.halfofus.com)



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# My Mental Health Rights on Campus



## My Mental Health Rights on Campus

Tools for School - Tip Sheet 5

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January 2012

Are you nervous about attending college if you have a mental health condition? If so, this information will give you the knowledge you need to address your rights, rules, and resources while at college.

### Can my school discipline me for something I think happened because of my mental health condition? It depends...

- Not if the school is discriminating against you because you have a mental health condition resulting in a disability. You are entitled to request a hearing and/or appeal process in most schools if you think you are being discriminated against.

*Disciplining you because of hospitalizations and related absences may be discrimination, and therefore, against the law. Get some legal help/advice if you want to appeal a disciplinary action.<sup>1</sup>*

- If your behavior violates a school's code of conduct, their disciplinary action may not be considered discriminatory as long as it is consistently applied to all students. Find out about the discipline policy and the disciplinary practice (such as "zero tolerance") in your school.

*A school may be able to discipline you for disorderly conduct if it's in their rules, even if the behavior is caused by a mental health condition. Every school has different policies and the consequences of your actions may vary so find out the code of conduct\* at your school.*

- Having an education accommodation may help prevent behaviors that can get you in trouble. You can get an accommodation if you have a documented disability. See the tip sheet on accommodations at <http://labs.umassmed.edu/transitionsRTC/Resources/Publications.html>

*Do not take on your school by yourself? You may need legal help to deal with these issues. You can get more information from the Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law: <http://www.bazelon.org/> and the National Disability Rights Network (NDRN): [www.ndrn.org](http://www.ndrn.org)*

### Can my school require me to take a leave of absence? It depends...

- A school should not impose a leave of absence simply because you have a record of a mental health diagnosis. A leave should only be imposed after an individualized assessment has been made to determine that the school considers you to be at risk of harming yourself or others.
- The school should also provide you with the same withdrawal arrangements as if you were leaving due to physical health reasons. Check your schools' policies.
- If the school tries to make you leave involuntarily, due to your mental health condition, it should give you "due process protections." You can also file a complaint with the disability compliance officer and/or the civil rights office. See what your schools' policies are regarding appeals.

*Due process protections include notifying the student of the action the school is considering and an explanation of why the school believes that such an action is necessary. The student and his or her representative should have an opportunity to respond and provide relevant information.*

<sup>1</sup> Codes of conduct may also be called "Expectations of Students" or "Conduct Requirements."



### Can I be forced to take medication?

- In most circumstances, you cannot be forced or ordered to take medication. However, schools may say that you need medication to comply with rules of conduct or to come back to campus. If you disagree, explain why and propose alternatives.

### How do I get help for my mental health condition on my college campus?

- Most college counseling centers can provide free therapy visits. Check your school's website.
- If you are calling your college counseling center and it is an emergency, please let the receptionist know right away so that they can take appropriate action, which may include helping to get you an immediate appointment.
- If you are in crisis and need immediate help: call 911, go to the nearest hospital emergency room, or call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-TALK - available 24 hours a day.
- Try ULifeline; this is an online college resource that provides information about mental health issues and professional resources on and around many campuses: [www.ulifeline.org](http://www.ulifeline.org).
- See if there is a chapter of Active Minds in or near your school. Active Minds is a student-run organization dedicated to raising mental health awareness and decreasing stigma among college students: <http://www.activeminds.org/>.

### What are my privacy rights in dealing with mental health professionals on or off campus?

- All mental health professionals are legally required to keep what you say during therapy sessions confidential unless you authorize the release of information. The only exception to this is if they are concerned for your safety or the safety of others.
- Most school counseling centers will not release your medical information without your written authorization. Ask your counseling center about their policy on confidentiality.

Adapted from: Your Mind. Your Rights. Campus Mental Health: Know Your Rights. A guide for students who want to seek help for mental illness or emotional distress.

<http://www.bazelon.org/Portals/0/pdf/YourMind-YourRights.pdf>

1. [www.bazelon.org](http://www.bazelon.org); <http://www.dlc-ma.org/contact.html>; <http://www.disabilitylawcenter.org/>



Visit Transitions RTC online at <http://labs.umassmed.edu/transitionsRTC>

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The Transition RTC is part of the Center for Mental Health Services Research, a Massachusetts Department of Mental Health Research Center of Excellence

# CAMPUS SOLIDARITY CAMPAIGN

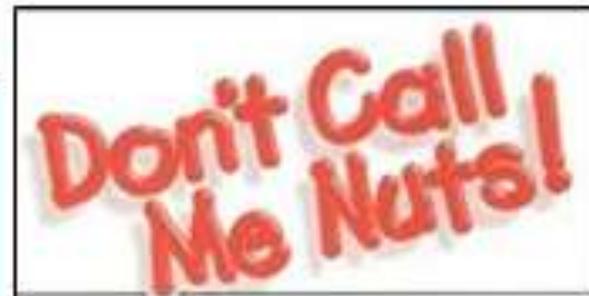
- Kristen Sokol
- Illinois Institute of Technology

Anti-stigma effort using a campaign logo  
Inspired by the “safe-space” campaign  
Currently under evaluation and testing.



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# SUPPORTING STUDENTS: A MODEL POLICY FOR COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law

Guiding Principle 2 (out of 48)

The College will:

- Acknowledge but not stigmatize mental health conditions
- Make suicide prevention a priority
- To seek health or treatment that they may need
- Ensure that personal information is kept confidential
- Make reasonable accommodations
- Refrain from discrimination against students with mental health conditions, including out-of-crisis actions toward those in crises.

Partially supported by the Temple Collaborative on  
Community Inclusion [www.tucollaborative.org](http://www.tucollaborative.org)



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# Campus Supports

- **Student Movements in Mental Health**
  - **National Efforts- Active Minds**
  - **NAMI on Campus**
- **RTC Efforts to support YA's on campus's Accommodations on Campus**
- **A Study on Young adult Experiences and perspectives**



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“changing the conversation about mental health”

**Educate** students so they know where to turn for help

**Empower** students to engage peers, administrators and communities on every campus

**Teach** student leaders to ensure the next generation of advocates

**Connect** all who are passionate about college mental health



**Alison Malmon, Founder of Active Minds**



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<http://www.activeminds.org/>





<http://sendsilencepacking.org/>

## First hand accounts and resources



**1,100 bags =  
1 bag to represent every  
student who dies  
each year by suicide**

# Chapters Making Change

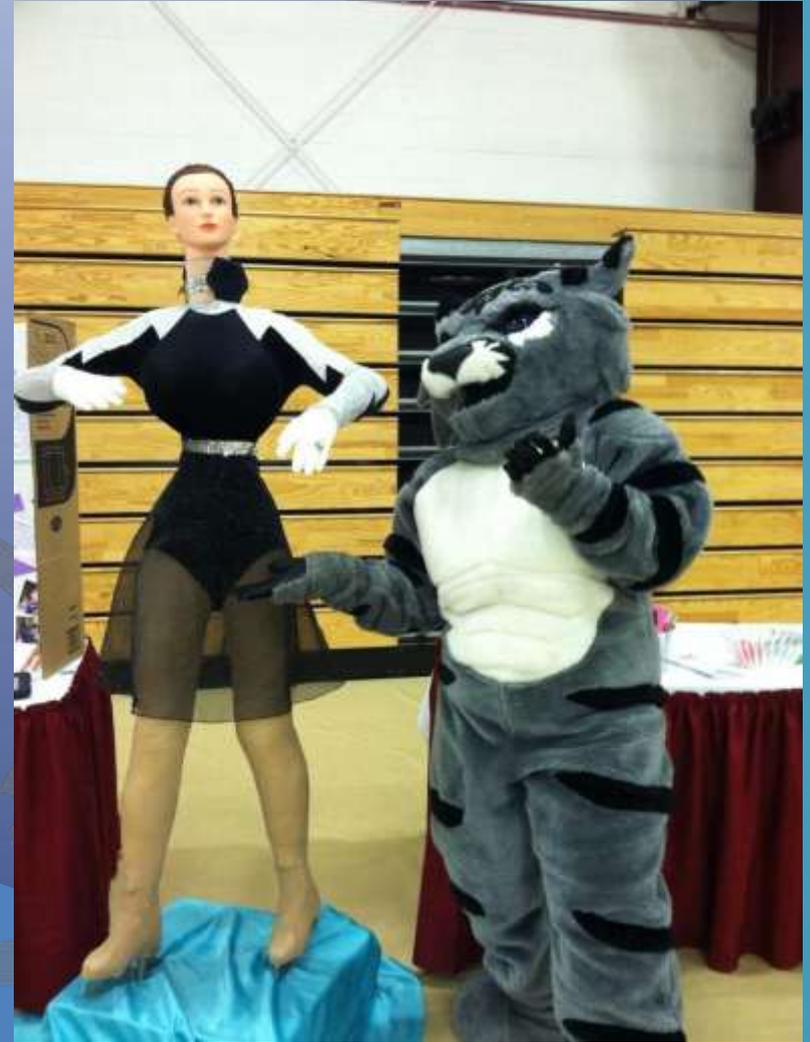


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# AMC

ANNA MARIA COLLEGE





- Anna Maria President created Lifesize Barbie
- Shared on campus during Eating Disorder Awareness Week
- Lifesize Barbie has appeared on FOX 25 news, Shepard Symposium of Social Justice, etc.

## Life Size Barbie



5' 9"  
Tall



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**Bridget Kesling, President of  
Active Minds at Anna Maria college**

“You may think I have the perfect body, but if I were real, my neck would only be big enough to hold a trachea or esophagus, so I’d have to pick between eating and breathing. I’d be so top heavy that I’d have to walk on all fours, and I couldn’t have kids because I do not have the 17-22% body fat necessary to bear children.”

-Lifesize Barbie-



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# Student of the Month



Awarded to:

ALL OF MY LOOKS,  
ARE TEACHERS.

THEY SAVED MY  
LIFE.

ouldn't

tell so many people that he is  
autistic. It defines him as a disorder in  
their eyes forever.

ore than t

You helped me realize that

I am more than my

mental illness

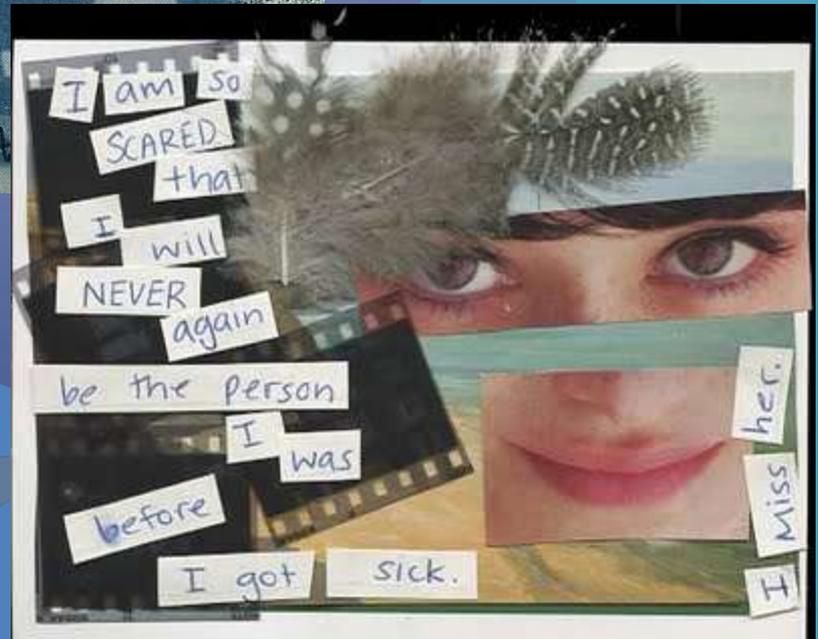
Thank you.



I AM RARELY ALONE



YET I AM SO VERY LONELY





- There are 23 NAMI on Campus clubs
- Promote early detection
- Provide intervention and resources
- Encourage students to get help
- Combat stigma
- End seclusion of college students with mental health conditions
- Promote existing services
- Advocate for enhanced supports



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[www.nami.org](http://www.nami.org)

# Providing College Based Resources: The Accommodations Tip Sheet



## Getting Accommodations at College: Tools for School

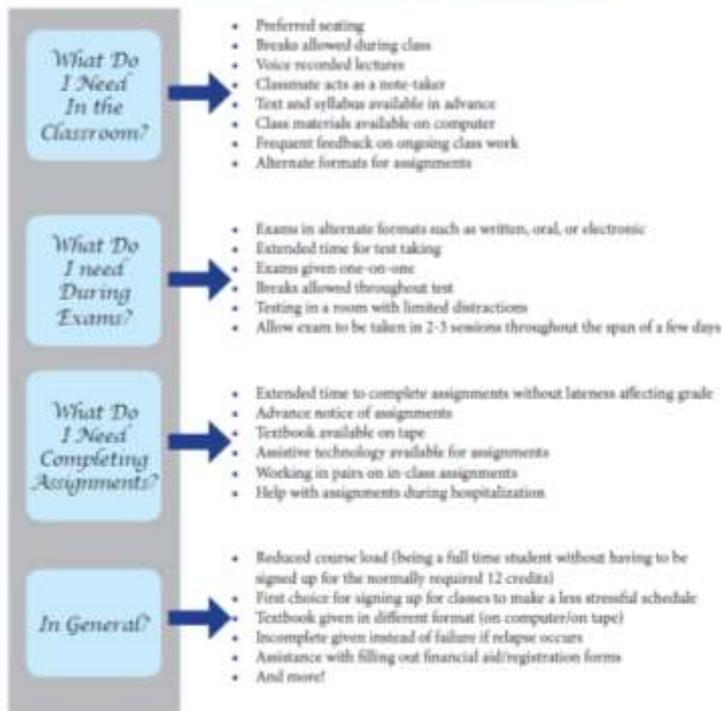
Tip Sheet 2

TRANSITIONS RTC

March 2011

If you are having trouble with school due to mental health, your school is obligated to provide extra supports and services to help you succeed. These supports and services are called accommodations and they can make a difference! Your school may also make some modifications to the courses at your request.

### What Accommodations or Modifications Can I Ask For?



### How Do I Get Accommodations?

1. **Find the disability services center** on your campus (typically called "disability services"). If there is no disability services center on your campus you can find out through your school's student support services whom to contact. Set up a meeting with someone there to find out about services.
2. **Get a signed note** from your psychiatrist or doctor that says what mental health condition you have (some schools may require different types of documentation). Only provide the minimum medical information that the school requires in order for you to qualify. Bring the note to disability services.
3. **Tell the person at disability services** what accommodations you feel you need. You can go to your doctor or others to get suggestions on what accommodations would work for you.
4. **Decide.** Someone at disability services will use the accommodations suggested to approve the services and modifications.
5. **Notify teachers.** Depending on the school, you or the disability services staff will provide your professors with your accommodation letter. The accommodation letter will not disclose your specific diagnosis, but will state that you have a disability that entitles you to receive modifications.
6. **Revise.** You can go back and make changes to your accommodations at any time. You may need different ones depending on the classes you take.

### What About Confidentiality?

You will have to tell disability services about your mental health. Check with them about their privacy policy as this varies by school, but most will assure confidentiality at your request. Your teachers will know you have a documented disability, but that's all.

### References:

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Visit Transitions RTC online at <http://labs.umassmed.edu/transitionsRTC>

Visit Voices4Hope online at <http://voices4hope.wikispaces.com/>



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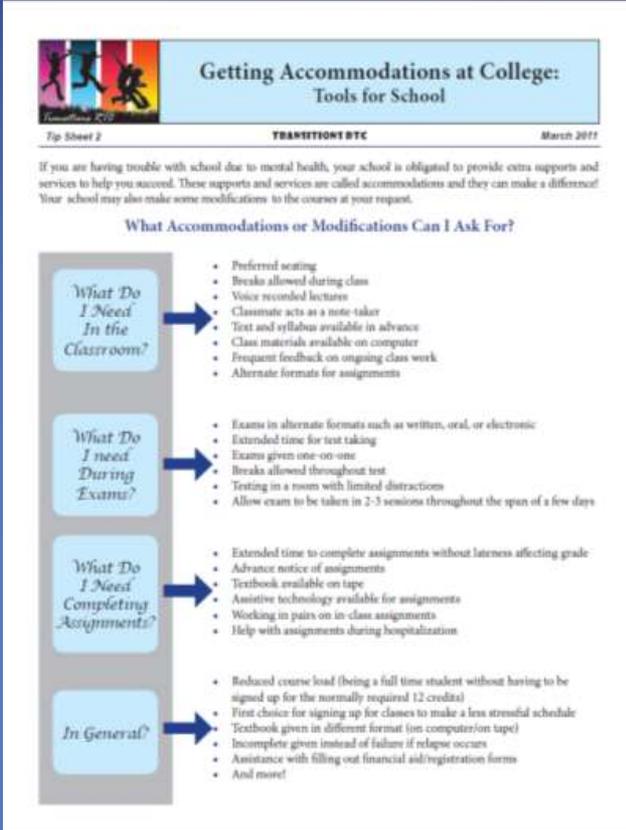
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# Accommodations Tip Sheet cont..

- Young Adults involved in Process
- Second most popular product
- Getting Young Adults the information they need to be successful
- Support Advocacy



**Getting Accommodations at College:  
Tools for School**

Tip Sheet 2      TRANSITION RTC      March 2011

If you are having trouble with school due to mental health, your school is obligated to provide extra supports and services to help you succeed. These supports and services are called accommodations and they can make a difference! Your school may also make some modifications to the courses at your request.

**What Accommodations or Modifications Can I Ask For?**

<i>What Do I Need In the Classroom?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Preferred seating</li><li>• Breaks allowed during class</li><li>• Voice recorded lectures</li><li>• Classmate acts as a note-taker</li><li>• Text and syllabus available in advance</li><li>• Class materials available on computer</li><li>• Frequent feedback on ongoing class work</li><li>• Alternate formats for assignments</li></ul>
<i>What Do I need During Exams?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Exams in alternate formats such as written, oral, or electronic</li><li>• Extended time for test taking</li><li>• Exams given one-on-one</li><li>• Breaks allowed throughout test</li><li>• Testing in a room with limited distractions</li><li>• Allow exam to be taken in 2-3 sessions throughout the span of a few days</li></ul>
<i>What Do I Need Completing Assignments?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Extended time to complete assignments without lateness affecting grade</li><li>• Advance notice of assignments</li><li>• Textbook available on tape</li><li>• Assistive technology available for assignments</li><li>• Working in pairs on in-class assignments</li><li>• Help with assignments during hospitalization</li></ul>
<i>In General?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Reduced course load (being a full time student without having to be signed up for the normally required 12 credits)</li><li>• First choice for signing up for classes to make a less stressful schedule</li><li>• Textbook given in different format (on computer/on tape)</li><li>• Incomplete given instead of failure if relapse occurs</li><li>• Assistance with filling out financial aid/registration forms</li><li>• And more!</li></ul>

“Words are very powerful, ‘reasonable accommodations’ is one the best phrases I know. If the youth use this phrase, it shows they are knowledgeable and that they are asking what need rather than what they want”



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# Reasonable Accommodations in Post-Secondary Education: Young Adult Perspectives and Experiences

- Participatory Action Research
- Phase 1: interview up to 25 young adult college students with mental health conditions to better understand their experiences seeking/using accommodations at college, conduct a literature review on the topic, and seek consultation from researchers in this field.
- Phase 2: create and design a web survey based on the results of the qualitative interviews
- Phase 3: collect data from a national sample using a web survey data collection tool.



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# Where do you find our products and these slides?

<http://labs.umassmed.edu/transitionsRTC/>



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