



Stigma and Post-Secondary Student Mental Health

mentalhealthathome.org



A Brief History of Stigma: Stigma Reduction Toolkit Post-Secondary Student Mental Health

Post-secondary institutions are one area where structural stigma can negatively impact people living with mental illness. This toolkit module has resources for campus advocacy in general as well as resources to put you in a better position to advocate for yourself.

Advocacy in General

Advocacy Campaigns

Want to get involved in advocacy on campus? These organizations have advocacy campaigns targeting postsecondary students, and they're a great way to get active in helping to reduce stigma.

- [Active Minds](#) (US): has over 550 local campus chapters
 - [Transform Your Campus](#) advocacy campaign guide
- [Jack.org](#): a Canadian mental health youth advocacy organization
- Jed Foundation (US):
 - [Advocacy](#): get involved with Jed's legislative and policy advocacy
 - [Jed Storytelling](#)
 - [Jed Student Ambassadors](#)
- [NAMI On Campus](#) and [StigmaFree On Campus](#)
- [Student Minds](#) (UK)
- This Is My Brave: college student [Brave Ambassadors](#)

Resources for Schools

If you're interested in advocating for your school to do more in terms of supporting student mental health, there are resources for schools that may be useful to incorporate into your advocacy.

- [Centre for Innovation in Campus Mental Health](#) (Canada): resources for universities
- Jed Foundation (US): [Jed Campus](#) resources
- Mental Health Commission of Canada: [Starter Kit: For the National Standard of Canada for Mental Health and Well-Being for Post-Secondary Students](#)
- Mental Health First Aid England: [A Whole University Framework for Mental Health](#)
- OCAD U & Ryerson University Campus Mental Health Partnership: [Policy Approaches to Post-Secondary Student Mental Health: A Scan of Current Practice](#)

Advocating for Yourself

Accommodations

Students with mental health-related disabilities are entitled to accommodations. Often, neither students nor schools have a good idea about what that means or what those types of accommodations would look like. Being prepared isn't going to guarantee success, but going in with information ready shows that you're aware of what you're entitled to, and it also gives them something concrete to work from rather than relying on stereotypes.

Your school most likely has an office for students with disabilities, which should be the first place you turn to. If they pressure you to do it all on your own with individual profs, that shouldn't be happening; they should be supporting you. Don't hesitate to reach out to local mental health or disability charities to see if they can help. By asking for accommodations, you're not asking for special treatment; you're asking for what you're legally entitled to.

Being entitled to accommodations doesn't mean you get the accommodations of your choice, nor does it mean that schools have to fundamentally change a course for you. Some of the possibilities include:

- Preferential seating, such as near a door to facilitate taking breaks
- Prearranged or frequent breaks
- Recording lectures
- Exam adjustments: extra time, a separate room
- Assignment adjustments: advance notice, extended time for submission, ability to submit in alternate format

These sites have more info on accommodations:

- Australian Disability Clearinghouse on Education and Training: [Reasonable Adjustments: Mental Health](#)
- Disability Rights UK: [Adjustments for Disabled Students](#)
- DO-IT: Disabilities, Opportunities, Internetworking, and Technology: [Academic Accommodations for Students with Psychiatric Disabilities](#)
- Fair Housing Center of West Michigan (US): [A Student Housing Professional's Guide to Reasonable Accommodations Under the Fair Housing Act](#)

- St. Lawrence College & Queen's University (Canada): [Post-Secondary Students with Mental Health Disabilities](#): A Guide to Academic Accommodations and Managing your Mental Health while on Campus
- Scope (UK): [Reasonable Adjustments in College and University Education](#)
- St. Lawrence College & Queen's University (Canada): [Academic Accommodations](#): Recommendations for Documentation Standards and Guidelines for Post-Secondary Students with Mental Health Disabilities
- U.S. Department of Education: [Students with Disabilities Preparing for Postsecondary Education](#): Know Your Rights and Responsibilities

Students' Rights

Unfortunately, there have been many examples of risk-averse institutions prioritizing liability protection over student well-being. Schools have evicted students from residence and imposed involuntary leaves of absence as a result of mental health crises like suicide attempts and hospitalizations. If you think you're being treated unfairly, you are not alone, and you shouldn't have to deal with it alone. Get loud; talk to the media and to mental health/disability charities. Your rights matter.

- [Campus Mental Health: Know Your Rights](#) from the Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law (US)
- Canadian Alliance of Student Associations: [Breaking Down Barriers](#): Mental Health and Canadian Post-Secondary Students
- Disability Rights North Carolina: [Your Rights in College: Students with Mental Health Impairments](#)
- Jed Foundation (US): [Starting the Conversation](#): College and Your Mental Health: has information on health privacy laws

The Boston University Center for Psychiatric Rehabilitation and the Ruderman Foundation have put together two guides on leaves of absence—one for [students](#) and one for campus [faculty and staff](#).

A Brief History of Stigma

A Brief History of Stigma has more information on what mental illness stigma is and what to do about it. You can learn more about the book on [Mental Health @ Home](#).

It's available on [Amazon](#) and [Google Play](#).

