COLLEGE STUDENTS & SUICIDE FACT SHEET
2016 FACT SHEET

Overview

- Most college and university undergraduates fall between the ages of 18 and 24. In 2014, 4,163 Americans within this age range died by suicide.1
- The suicide rate for college students falls in between 6.5 and 7.5 per 100,000.2
- Suicide is the second leading cause of death for college students.3
- According to a 2014 survey, approximately 31% of college students have seriously considered suicide. This rate has increased since 2008, when it was reported that 25% of college students seriously considered suicide.4
- The same 2014 survey reported that approximately 9% of college students have made a suicide attempt. This rate has also risen since 2008, when it was reported to be 8%.5
- Suicidal ideations tend to be more prevalent among undergraduate students than graduate students.6
- Even though one survey reported that 77% of college students who died by suicide in 2014 were Caucasian, the majority of college students who report thoughts of suicide belong to ethnic minorities.7,8
- According to a survey of college counseling centers, self-injurious thoughts and behaviors were concerns that presented in 5.73% of cases.9
- Across the board, colleges and universities report a growing demand for mental health services in recent years.5
- A survey of college counseling centers revealed that 86% of students who died by suicide did not seek campus counseling services prior to their death.10
- The most prevalent means of deaths by suicide for college students include firearms, suffocation, and jumping.5
- University counseling centers have a client dropout rate of 30.4%.11 The premature discontinuation of mental health services has been shown to have negative consequences.12

Are you a college student? Research your University’s counseling center or other mental health resources to find out how you can get help on your campus.

Resources and Other Information

Active Minds www.activeminds.org
The Jed Foundation www.jedfoundation.org
Learn Psychology: Mental Health and Well-Being for College Students www.learnpsychology.org/mental-health/
Mental Health America: Life on Campus www.mentalhealthamerica.net/life-campus
Society for Adolescent Health and Medicine: Mental Health Resources for Adolescents and Young Adults www.adolescenthealth.org/Clinical-Care-Resources/Topics-in-Adolescent-Health/Mental-Health/Mental-Health-Resources-For-Adolescents.aspx
Transition Year www.transitionyear.org
ULifeline www.ulifeline.org

RISK FACTORS

Students leaving home for the first time and entering university life encounter a new and unique set of challenges and other issues. Because of this, several risk factors are particular to this demographic. Risk factors for college students include:13,14,15

- Loss of previous support system and social network
- Academic stress
- Increased pressure to succeed
- Feelings of isolation
- Mental illness, especially anxiety and depression
- Lack of adequate coping skills
- Conduct issues
- Previous suicide attempts
- Substance abuse
- Interpersonal difficulties
- History of abuse or trauma
- Impulsivity
- Fear of mental health stigma
- Insomnia

Protective Factors

Despite the obstacles they face, college students are a population with access to tremendous care and networks of support. Many students in universities have the unique advantage of access to mental health care without fees attached. According to a 2014 survey of college counseling centers, less than 5% of schools charged a fee for personal counseling services, and less than half of these institutions had a session limit.16

These on-campus services can serve as an extremely beneficial resource for students dealing with suicidal thoughts. Other protective factors for college students include:17,18,19

- Expansive network of social support (resident advisors, faculty, academic advisors, coaches, friends, religious/spiritual directors, etc).
- Connectedness to the school community
- Plans for the future
- Personal spirituality or religion
- Physical activity
- Resiliency and problem solving skills

If you or someone you know is suicidal, please contact a mental health professional or call 1-800-273-TALK (8255).