

The Jed and Clinton Health Matters Campus Program: Promoting Mental Health and Preventing Suicide and Substance Abuse on College Campuses

The **Jed and Clinton Foundations** are working together to address suicide prevention, mental health promotion and substance abuse prevention on college campuses. To be most effective, this work needs to be done at the community level.

What does this mean?

[Suicide is now the second leading cause of death](#) among people aged 15 to 34 in the U.S. While we still struggle with predicting and preventing suicide in individuals, we know that there are many steps we can take to lower risk of suicide across communities. Sometimes we do this by trying to identify suicidal individuals and provide them care for their suicidal impulses and underlying emotional problems. While identifying those at imminent risk and providing care are important components of a comprehensive approach to suicide prevention, this is a bit like looking for people who are experiencing acute chest pain as a way of preventing heart attacks. This is important and even necessary, but most everyone would agree that it is also crucial (and better in the long run) to try to intervene earlier: get more people to eat heart healthy diets, lower their cholesterol and high blood pressure, and exercise more. Prevention and early treatment across large populations are better than having to manage a medical crisis.

There are similar steps we can take to help lower the risk of suicide. We can teach people how to identify and manage their emotions and how to handle relationships and conflict better. We can help people identify emotional problems that increase risk for suicide and reach out for help sooner-before a crisis. We can help people get care for anxiety, depression, substance abuse, severe personality disorders and psychosis (people in an early stage of psychotic illness are at particularly high risk for suicide and often do not seek help). [We can support policies that limit access to deadly means-safeguarding bridges and roofs, and working to promote sensible gun safety policies, for example.](#) We know these steps lower risk for suicide. These interventions are all things that can be done at the community level through communication, education and policy intervention.

Among college students the leading causes of death are accidents-often caused by alcohol or other drugs -- and suicide. We know that across the country about [10 percent of college students](#) are seen yearly by their school counseling services but many more are having emotional and substance problems. So counseling services provide essential services cannot do everything. We need to do more by providing community-based emotional education and skill building activities across campus.

And we are working to do just that.

Recently, The Jed Foundation and Clinton Foundation have partnered to create a community oriented suicide and substance abuse prevention and mental health promotion program for colleges. [The Jed and Clinton Health Matters Campus Program](#) walks campus leadership

through recommended practices for promoting mental health, preventing suicide and reducing substance abuse on their campus. As each campus is different, there is ongoing feedback and discussion between the school and Campus Program, and guidance provided to schools to help them determine what approaches and activities are best suited for their campus. Schools join the program and work with us and each other over a four year period in order to maximize progress in planning and program implementation and growth.

We will share interesting and innovative activities among colleges that are members of this program so that schools will benefit from the excellent and innovative work already being done by so many schools in mental health promotion and substance abuse prevention. We strongly believe that colleges that are improving their emotional support and substance prevention programs will have healthier, safer and more successful student bodies.

What can you do?

If you are a college student or parent of a college student, encourage your school to participate in the Campus Program. Whoever you are, learn about mental health from sites such as the Huffington Post's ["Stronger Together" website](#), the [National Institute of Mental Health's](#) websites or [Half of Us](#). These are excellent places to start.

Know when to get [help for yourself or a family member or friend](#).

If you are currently struggling with an emotional problem or substance abuse issue, please get help "upstream" before it becomes a crisis (recall what we said about chest pain-the earlier you address your problems the better off you will be!).

If you are in a crisis situation now, call 911 or local emergency services or contact the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-TALK (8255).