HEALTHY MINDS
Checklist

Supporting Student Mental Health in Higher Education

Student mental health challenges are creating a public health crisis that threatens the livelihood and wellbeing of our future generation.

Poor mental health can impact a student's GPA, physical health, social life and professional prosperity, and can present itself through depression, anxiety, eating disorders and addiction. Disparities in the ways in which students access services can exacerbate these challenges and increase the prevalence of mental health issues at institutions of higher education. These barriers exist through stigma around seeking services, busy academic and professional schedules, hours of services, and a lack of information on what services are available to students. Surveys have shown that 20 percent of students say they used mental health services on campuses and nearly 75 percent said they would consider using university mental health services. It is crucial that schools take a comprehensive and campus-wide effort to address mental health.

The Healthy Minds Checklist takes these barriers into consideration to create programs that are physically, socially and financially accessible for all students. These programs are essential and necessary in ensuring that students thrive on and off campus.

COLORADO
Department of Higher Education

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What is the Healthy Minds Checklist?

The Healthy Minds Checklist aims to create inclusive programs that enhance existing campus resources and benefit both students and institutions of higher education.

By implementing programs that meet the checklist requirements, schools will provide a wide range of support services for students and earn a Healthy Minds designation. Already we are seeing innovation in the mental health services available at select campuses, including virtual services, free mental health screenings and counseling sessions, easier access to information, and increasing data collection on the needs of students. What the Checklist aims to do is amplify these existing services and make them accessible for ALL students across ALL institutions in Colorado.

How was the Healthy Minds Checklist Created?

The programs included in the Healthy Minds Checklist come from the combined experience and knowledge of leaders who are dedicated to supporting the mental health of students and communities.

Representatives from institutions of higher education, nonprofits, and state agencies all played pivotal roles in providing feedback and suggestions to ensure that the checklist included student-centered programs that met the capacity of schools. Through community convenings, survey results and national data, the Colorado Department of Higher Education (CDHE) was able to gain a better understanding of the needs of Colorado students and the key health disparities that burden their ability to access mental health services and resources.

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Goals

The Healthy Minds Checklist aims to improve the health and academic success of students by ensuring that schools have the resources to:

1 Emphasize prevention and self care

2 Provide resources for substance use disorders and recovery

3 Ensure culturally competent and accessible services

4 Elevate student voices

5 Increase accessible information for student services

Programs

To meet checklist requirements schools will:

IMPLEMENT THE FOUR CORE PROGRAMS. The core programs have large support from schools and are designed to use the resources that many campuses already have.

IMPLEMENT SIX FOCUSED INITIATIVES, two in each of the three focus areas: awareness, access, and prevention. The focused initiatives are designed to keep the recommended programs broad to give schools creativity and flexibility, but also have evidence-based programming that will specifically meet the needs of students.

Innovation in Student Mental Health Programs: To highlight the innovative and impactful programs schools already have, campuses are encouraged to work with CDHE to highlight these and may use them as one of the two required programs in each category.

Core Programs *(Implement all four)*

☐ **INCLUDE MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES INFORMATION ON SYLLABI AND STUDENT IDS.**

Many students are unaware of existing mental health services on their campus. Featuring information on campus mental health services and crisis numbers on the syllabi and student IDs are affordable methods to improve student access to services, create a campus culture that supports help-seeking behavior, and standardized access across the state.

☐ **OFFER PREVENTION PROGRAMS THAT FOCUS ON TWO OF THE FOLLOWING WITH THE INTENTION OF IMPROVING MENTAL HEALTH:**

physical health, nutritional health, mindfulness, yoga, art therapy, time management, brain health, other mental health promotion programs. Mental health promotion goes beyond clinical services and should emphasize overall health and wellbeing. Preventative programs are a great way to raise awareness of mental health and create an inclusive campus environment that supports the success and health of students.

☐ **HOLD ONE AWARENESS EVENT EACH YEAR.**

Many students are unaware that mental health wellbeing is an issue for their peers and don't know that campus resources exist to help. By holding at least one annual student-centered event to bring awareness of mental health resources, campuses will connect students to services, reduce the stigma associated with seeking assistance and create a supportive culture around student wellbeing. Student led presentations, videos, or online programs can focus on existing programs, normalize help seeking behavior, suicide prevention and other mental health promotion resources.

☐ **PROVIDING AVENUES TO ACCESS ONLINE MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT OR CONNECT STUDENTS TO COMMUNITY RESOURCES.**

Providing virtual access to counseling and mental health support resources reduces barriers to physically accessing services. Though some students may prefer in-person services, having virtual options will benefit remote, part-time and evening students. If schools are not able to provide these services, they should be able to connect students to resources in the community.

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Focused Initiatives

Implement two programs in each of the focused initiatives

ACCESS

These programs offer direct assistance to mental health services.

- ☐ Information on crisis line and counseling services sent out with email or text incident alerts
- ☐ Counseling staff directory that includes a short biography, area(s) of specialty and indicates whether a counselor has experience in cultural competency
- ☐ Card/pamphlet that lists counseling/mental health services that all staff/faculty can have in their office if students need
- ☐ Innovation in access

AWARENESS

These programs raise awareness for mental health resources and educate staff, faculty and students.

- ☐ Information on mental health services available for viewing on online learning platforms (e.g. institutional website, Canvas, Blackboard, D2L, etc.)
- ☐ Include wellness info in routine newsletters (ex: upcoming events, mental health resources, unique methods of mindfulness)
- ☐ Participate in at least one awareness month/week for mental health
- ☐ Innovation in awareness

PREVENTION

These programs provide preventative services to address mental health and overall wellbeing.

- ☐ Evidence-based mental health training for faculty and staff with online accessibility (e.g. mental health First Aid training)
- ☐ On-campus and virtually accessible mental health task force that includes students, faculty and staff
- ☐ Offer free and confidential mental health screening services
- ☐ School Disciplinary Services addresses mental health or substance use recovery during student interactions
- ☐ Create a specific Suicide Prevention campaign that focuses on harm prevention, bystander training, crisis services, and peer advocacy
- ☐ Innovation in prevention

The Healthy Minds Campus designation is a statewide recognition of the commitment of the institution in supporting the health and well-being of their students

Next Steps

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE A HEALTHY MINDS CAMPUS?

By implementing programs that meet the checklist requirements, schools provide a wide range of support services for students and receive designation as a Healthy Minds Campus. This designation is a statewide recognition of the commitment of the institution in supporting the health and well-being of their students, and signifies that there is a collective effort across students, staff, faculty and community members to raise awareness and access to inclusive and comprehensive mental health services.

EVALUATION

The Colorado Department of Higher Education will work closely with institutions of higher education to ensure that they can meet the requirements of the checklist while addressing the unique needs of their students with the resources they have. Once schools have the four Core Programs and six programs from the Focused Initiatives, schools can contact CDHE via this **link** to request this designation CDHE will work with partner agencies and organizations to assess the submission and, after the programs are approved by CDHE, campuses will earn a Healthy Minds Campus designation that will last one year (at which point the IHE will reapply for the designation).

> Schools who have completed the four Core Programs and six programs from the Focused Initiatives, can request the Healthy Minds Campus Designation **here**.

FROM CAMPUS TO COMMUNITY AND BEYOND

Working broadly to address the social determinants of student success and specifically expanding mental health services on campuses are investments that benefit students, staff, faculty and community members. One case study in California has shown that for every dollar spent on student mental health services at four- year institutions, society will save $6.49 per student, and $11.39 per student at community colleges. These interventions can go on to save the state millions of dollars while supporting the health, financial and professional success of students as they continue their post-college life. A Healthy Minds designation symbolizes a commitment to helping communities thrive, and brings to light a new meaning of what it means to support social determinants of student success. Supporting student mental health goes beyond just impacting the campus and can benefit the community overall.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:
Connect here

Visit: https://highered.colorado.gov/social-determinants-of-student-success

Email: Michael Vente at Michael.Vente@dhe.state.co.us

Working together to support Colorado Institutions and students

COLORADO Department of Higher Education

YOUNG INVINCIBLES