

The Impact of COVID-19 on Student Health and Safety

COVID-19 has affected Missouri campuses in unprecedented ways. As sheltering in place, virtual learning, and social distancing became the new normal, we considered the unprecedented impact on students' health and well-being, especially related to stress and mental health, financial stability, and substance misuse. As Missouri's higher education consortium dedicated to creating healthier and safer campus communities, Partners in Prevention believes the COVID-19 pandemic could have lasting negative effects on our college students beyond the illness itself.

While we are all certainly concerned about protecting students from the transmission of COVID-19, it is now more important than ever to remain committed to our mission to address concerns related to substance misuse, mental health, and interpersonal violence. Stopping or pausing campus work on these efforts could be detrimental to our campuses beyond the immediate effects of COVID-19.



Concerns exist because:

Alcohol sales increased during shelter in place/stay at home orders

Alcohol and cannabis use pose risks during this time:

- Drinking alone due to boredom and/or a lack of social connection
- Cannabis use can impact lung functioning, as well as brain development
- Alcohol and cannabis use can be detrimental to academic achievement
- Students may be using alcohol, cannabis, or other drugs to 'self-medicate' or cope

Students are traumatized and trauma can often cause or exacerbate substance misuse

Health disparities pose acute risk among certain populations:

- Experience of LGBTQ students in potentially unsafe home environments during this time
- Students of color, especially Black/African American students whose communities have been impacted more by COVID-19

Discrimination of Asian/Asian-American students may exist due to the origin of COVID-19; students may feel stigma or experience discrimination if they are or were sick (whether with COVID-19 or not)

Sex and partying during COVID-19 could increase transmission of COVID-19

Suicidal thoughts and mental health concerns may be more prevalent:

- Stress, feelings of hopelessness, and trauma during this time may worsen existing mental health concerns, or initiate thoughts of suicide, and/or feelings of depression, and/or anxiety

Students may be impacted by interpersonal violence in a variety of ways:

- Students who have experienced interpersonal violence may be at higher risk for substance misuse and mental health concerns
- Experiences of abuse and/or non-consensual sexual contact while sheltering in place (and without the ability to seek services) could be continuing to impact students' health and well-being when back on campus



We encourage campuses to continue to work on the health and safety concerns that impact students.
Other Resources and Considerations for Campuses

- **Ask Listen Refer Online Suicide Prevention Training:** asklistenrefer.org
- **National Suicide Prevention Lifeline:** 1-800-273-8255
- **Partners in Prevention:** pip.missouri.edu or social media (@missouripip on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and LinkedIn)
- **American College Health Association:** acha.org
- **NASPA COVID-19 Resources:** naspa.org/project/covid-19-resources
- **Centers for Disease Control:** cdc.gov
- **Partners in Prevention: COVID-19 survey**
 - Implemented fall 2020 to assess impact of COVID-19 on health and well-being

A toolkit for your campus with other resources is located at pip.missouri.edu/COVID-19.html

Member Schools

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To learn more about Partners in Prevention, visit pip.missouri.edu

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