

Is My Child Safe on Campus?

As a parent, images of the recent tragedies at Northern Illinois University and Virginia Tech are probably lingering in your mind. You may be wondering, “How safe is *my child* on campus?”

We do our very best to ensure a safe campus community. Campus officials work diligently to maintain effective security measures, provide safety education initiatives and create a forum for communication about potential threats.

Students can help us in maintaining a safe, positive community. And you can help by talking with your student about the importance of self- and community-responsibility.

Reminding Students to Take Care of Themselves

Encourage your student to:

- Lock her room door. Even though she “knows everyone on her floor,” she can’t control for guests and visitors strolling the hallways. Same goes for off campus residences. Students never know who might make their way into the neighborhood.
- Ask who is at the door before opening it. The residence hall community does not have to be as informal as he thinks.
- Walk with a buddy late at night or in potentially dangerous situations. Whenever possible, use an escort system.
- Be smart about his use of alcohol and other drugs. Being under the influence makes it difficult for students to think clearly.

- Get to know the campus public safety officers.
- Be careful about the information he chooses to share online. Whether it’s in an away message or on a social networking site, more people have access to his profiles than he thinks.
- Keep her whereabouts “under wraps.” Posting her schedule on her door or online is not a good idea.
- Keep his vehicle locked and store valuables out of site—and be cautious and aware when approaching his vehicle late at night.

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Working Together with Campus Officials

Campus officials are trained to work with college students. They have a great deal of expertise in helping to manage difficult situations, referring students to the appropriate resources, and working together to create a safe and positive educational environment. Encourage your student to ask for help when needed. Student life professionals, campus security officers, staff and faculty members will offer support—and point your student in the right direction.

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Taking Care of the Community

Encourage your student to:

- Unprop propped doors to residence halls or other buildings on campus. Propped doors make public safety's job more difficult and compromise the overall security measures in place.
- Deny strangers access to her residence hall (by not letting in people behind her)—even if she thinks the person is a student. Even though it can be hard to confront a stranger and deny access, her diligence will help keep *everyone* that much safer.
- Treat the campus grounds with respect. Vandalizing and damaging directional signs, fire extinguishers and other safety equipment costs the college valuable funds and effort that could be directed to other areas. Plus, those items won't be available when a real emergency strikes.
- Follow campus policies—they're in place for students' safety.
- Report suspicious behaviors to the appropriate campus officials, even if it's "just a hunch." His tip may be one of many being received about an individual. Every little bit of information about a potential threat is critical.

Taking Emergency-Preparedness Drills Seriously

Tragedy provides an unfortunate reminder of the importance of being prepared for disaster to strike. Encourage your student to cooperate with emergency-preparedness drills to assist in ensuring the campus is as safe and prepared as possible.

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