



Drugs and Alcohol:

The Impact on International Student Emotional Wellness

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Presenters



Amanda Connolly
*Director for International Student
& Scholars
Lehigh University*



Mandy Reinig
*Director of Global
Engagement
Virginia Wesleyan University*



Leslie Reynolds
*Manager, University Relations
International Student Insurance*



Audience Polls

Agenda



- Current Climate
- Immigration & Visa Regulations
- Approaches to Support
- Resources & Brainstorming
- Discussion and Q&A



Current Climate

34% of college respondents struggled with anxiety disorder and 41% with depression according to the 2021 [Healthy Minds Study](#)



Mental Health Crisis

73% of students reported moderate or serious psychological distress according to the [Fall 2021 American College Health Association National College Health Assessment](#) survey.



Impact of COVID

- The efforts made to help minimize the spread of COVID left many students with uncertainty and concern about their health, mental health, and academic futures.
- Post-secondary students were disproportionately affected by the social and economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- A survey of more than 16,800 students in 21 countries found that more than half of undergraduates said their mental health had suffered as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. ([Chegg, 2021](#))



International Students Hit Even Harder

“International students across the globe have been hit particularly hard by the pandemic due to **additional sources of uncertainty**,” – Cory Owen, EdD, associate dean of students at Yale-NUS College and the author of *Advising International Students with Disabilities*.

“You have the response of any young person living through the pandemic—and doing it in another country **far away from their support networks**.”
—Emma Swift, EdM, associate director of the Office of International Education at the University of Vermont and the author of *U.S. Classroom Culture*.

“**Isolation**, especially for first-year graduate and professional students living off campus, who are far away from families and yet to form their own community locally.” – Ling Jin, MA, student development coordinator at Duke University’s International House.

Drug & Alcohol Trends Among College Students



Drug and alcohol use on the rise across the United States:

- 53% of full-time college students ages 18-22 drank alcohol in the last month and about 33% engaged in binge drinking in that same period [NIAAA](#).
- [Alcohol consumption increased](#) by 39% between February 2020 to November 2020 across the United States.
- [NIDA study](#) that analyzes substance use indicates marijuana usage is up amongst college students (44% in 2020 compared to 38% in 2015).

Defining Abuse, Dependence and Addiction (CDC)



- Alcohol Abuse: A **pattern of drinking that results in harm** to one's health interpersonal relationships, or ability to work.
- Drug Abuse: Any **illicit use**. Street drug use in general and prescription medications without a prescription.
- Dependence: When a user develops a **physical tolerance to a substance over time** and experiences withdrawal symptoms. Typically dependence is resolved when slowly tapering off the use.
- Addiction: When **extensive use has caused the user's brain chemistry to change**. Uncontrollable cravings to use drugs (even when harm to self or others is/has been done). Treatment is necessary.



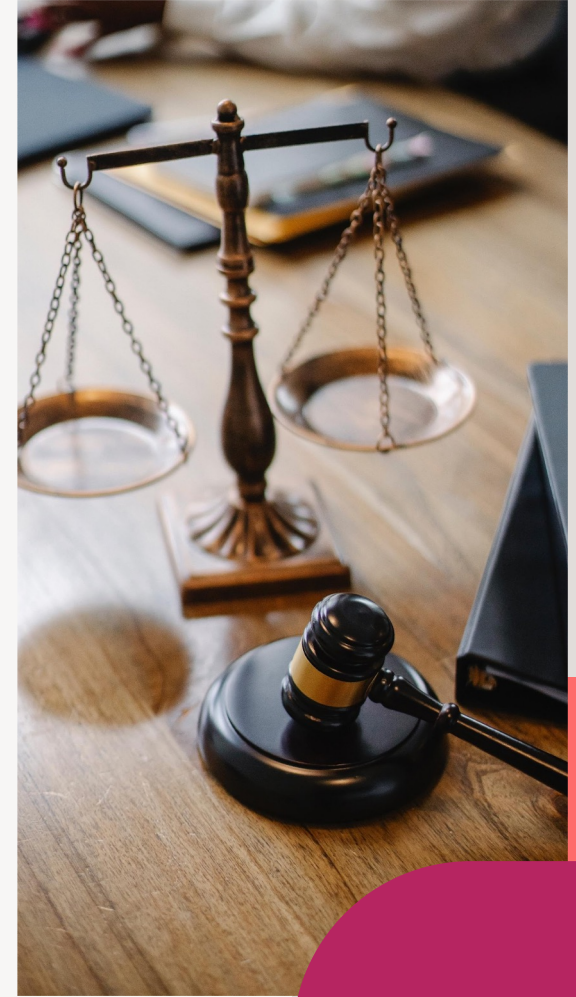
Mental Health and Substance Abuse

International Student Stressors

- Academic challenges
- Anxiety and depression
- Financial stress
- Homesickness
- Immigration regulation
- Internet challenges
- Isolation
- Time Differences
- Unstable living conditions

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- Substance abuse can occur more frequently with certain mental health problems:
 - Depression
 - Anxiety
 - Schizophrenia
 - Personality Disorders
 - In some cases:
 - Form of self-medicating
 - Mental and substance abuse disorders share some underlying causes

Immigration & Cultural Concerns



Cultural Differences

- The drinking and/or drug culture varies widely across cultures and may be more or less strict for your students (depending on home country)
- The US College drinking and drug culture is its own reality that your students may have ideas about from media, social media, and pop culture
- The cultural acceptance of mental illness, substance abuse, and therapy can also vary widely
- Importance of educating both students AND faculty/staff on these cultural differences and stigmas



Legal Concerns



- Laws that are very different from their home country (e.g. drinking age, public intoxication, open containers)
- State Law vs. Federal Law
 - Unlike peers, international students must follow federal law (not just state law)
 - e.g. Marijuana remains illegal under federal law but may be legal in your state
- Variation in Penalties/Charges under State Law
 - Violations of drug/alcohol laws categorized differently by state for DUI, Underage drinking, providing alcohol to a minor
 - Do you know your state's underage drinking charges? Minor in possession charges?
 - Good Samaritan Law

Immigration Consequences & Concerns



- Reduced Course Load – when is it necessary and allowed?
- Visa renewal denial
- Port of entry problems
- SEVIS record termination
 - Institutional dismissal
- Visa cancelation
- ICE and deportation

Institutional Rules & Responsibilities



- Dry vs. wet campus
- Do drinking and drug use rules differ from state or federal rules on your campus?
- Disciplinary action policy - may affect full-time status
- Reporting structure (are DSOs alerted?)
- Continuity of care
- Staff training for substance abuse and mental health awareness

Approaches to Support



Lehigh University

Background information

- 7,394 total students
 - 5,451 undergrads; 1,770 grad students
- Undergrads must live on campus during first 2 years
 - Large Greek population (about $\frac{1}{3}$ of undergrads)
- ~1,000 enrolled international students

University Counseling and Psychological Services

- 14 professional staff (clinical psychologists and trainees)
- Large group counseling program
- Added mySSP in Summer 2022



Lehigh University



- Emphasis on collaboration
 - Student of Concern form
 - Wellness and academics often directly intersect
- OISS can help other offices understand how immigration and wellness intersect
- Programming
 - International Student Orientation (Grad/Undergrad separate)
 - Training with Orientation Leaders
 - Programming for students and scholars, including during breaks



VIRGINIA
WESLEYAN
UNIVERSITY

Virginia Wesleyan University



Background information

- ~1300 traditional undergraduate students
- 800+ live on campus
- 35 international students (F-1, J-1, TPS, and NATO)
- 48% Diversity

Counseling Information

- 2 - full-time counselors; 5 - part-time counselors (interns - 21 hrs/wk)
- As of 11/15/22 – 949 sessions with 142 unique clients



Virginia Wesleyan University

- Partnership with on-campus resources
 - Ex. Counseling Services and Office of Student Affairs
- Early Alert System
 - For both academic and behavioral issues
- Participating in RA Training
- Special International Student Orientation Session
- Student Activities On-Campus Programming



Insurance Considerations

- Health insurance should cover mental health
 - Verify coverage (i.e., internal limits, day maximum, etc.)
 - Includes coverage for substance abuse
 - Injuries/illnesses as a result of intoxication/drug abuse
 - Suicide/attempted suicide
 - Provider network
- Telecounseling
 - Increasing in popularity
 - Ask if telecounseling is part of your telemedicine program
 - A range of programs available through insurance plans or independently
 - Some have additional resources/screening surveys





Resources

Free Resources

Emotional & Mental Health Training Program Drug & Alcohol Awareness Video

Emotional & Mental Health Training Program

Emotional and mental health has become a hot topic across schools throughout the US as many international students struggle with culture shock, stress, anxiety, depression, etc. Because of the stigma surrounding mental health, international students seek help at much lower rates compared to domestic students but have additional struggles as they adjust to their new environment.

International Student Insurance has worked with the Center for Cross-Cultural Student Emotional Wellness at Massachusetts General Hospital to develop a comprehensive training to help students overcome these barriers. The training is designed specifically for international students, and is one hour long (although it can be adjusted to meet any time frame).

This complete training was developed so that any staff member can give the training, as it includes the following:



Powerpoint Presentation

Professionally designed presentation to walk your students through the training.



Video Content

Two videos on mental health awareness and student perceptions on culture shock and stress from around the world.



Student Handout

A downloadable student guide take-away, or we can supply hard copies, to distribute to students.



Interactive Activities

Activities that encourage dialogue on many of the larger issues such as myths surround seeking help.



Proctor Guide

Complete guide to walk you or your staff through the training, including a full script and talking points.



Email lreynolds@internationalstudentinsurance.com, give me your business card after the session, or scan the QR code above for access to the training and videos.



Services & Hotlines

Hotlines

- National Suicide Prevention
 - 988 (new 3-digit number)
 - www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org
- Essential Community Services - 211
- The National Domestic Violence Hotline
 - 1-800-799-SAFE
 - <http://www.thehotline.org>
- It Gets Better Project (LGBTQ)
 - 1-866-4-U-TREVOR
 - www.itgetsbetter.org/pages/get-help

Services

- Crisis Text Line
 - <http://www.crisistextline.org/>
- Text 741-741



Discussion

Q&A

What support is provided on your campus around this topic?





Thank You!