



# Drug and Alcohol:

The Impact on International Student Emotional Wellness

# Presenters



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# Agenda



- Current Climate
- Connection with Mental Health
- Immigration Implications
- Effective Programming
- External Partner Support
- Resources
- 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 increases 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
- Trends are showing that students are drinking more frequently but in lower quantities per occasion ([Dumas et al., 2020](#); [Graupensperger, Fleming, et al., 2020](#))





# **The Connection With Mental Health**





# 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

- 
- 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

# Identifying Signs

## Behavioral

Establish a baseline to identify the signs.



- Drop in attendance and performance at work or school
- Frequently getting into trouble
- Using substances in physically hazardous situations (ex: driving)
- Engaging in secretive or suspicious behaviors
- Changes in appetite or sleep patterns
- Unexplained change in personality or attitude
- Sudden mood swings, irritability, or angry outbursts
- Periods of unusual hyperactivity, agitation, or giddiness
- Lacking motivation
- Appearing fearful, anxious, or paranoid, with no reason

# Identifying Signs

## Physical



Establish a baseline to identify the signs.

- Bloodshot eyes and abnormally sized pupils
- Sudden weight loss or weight gain
- Deterioration of physical appearance
- Unusual smells on breath, body, or clothing
- Tremors, slurred speech, or impaired coordination

# Identifying Signs

## Social



Establish a baseline to identify the signs.

- Sudden change in friends, favorite hangouts, and hobbies
- Legal problems related to substance use
- Unexplained need for money or financial problems
- Using substances even though it causes problems in relationships

# Abuse, Dependence and Addiction



- Alcohol Abuse: “A pattern of drinking that results in harm to one’s health interpersonal relationships, or ability to work.” – Center for Disease Control and Prevention
- 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.



# Overcoming the Stigma

- Dispel the myths
- Know the facts about cultural differences around counseling
- Invite on-campus counselors/psychologists to orientation and meet & greet opportunities
- Educate counselors/psychologists on how to communicate across cultures
- Give testimonials even anonymously, and perhaps in their native language
- Normalize students' concerns and stress
- Creative ways of introducing counseling



# Resources on Campus: Reactive & Proactive

- Depression screening at the Student Health Center
- Establishing a knowledge-sharing community (know your partners)
- Inform and promote information on student activities, engagement opportunities, and fitness centers
- Know the services offered around campus, and form connections
  - Support groups/medical practitioners who speak other languages
  - Ombudsperson office
  - Chapel and community religious/spiritual support centers
  - Others?

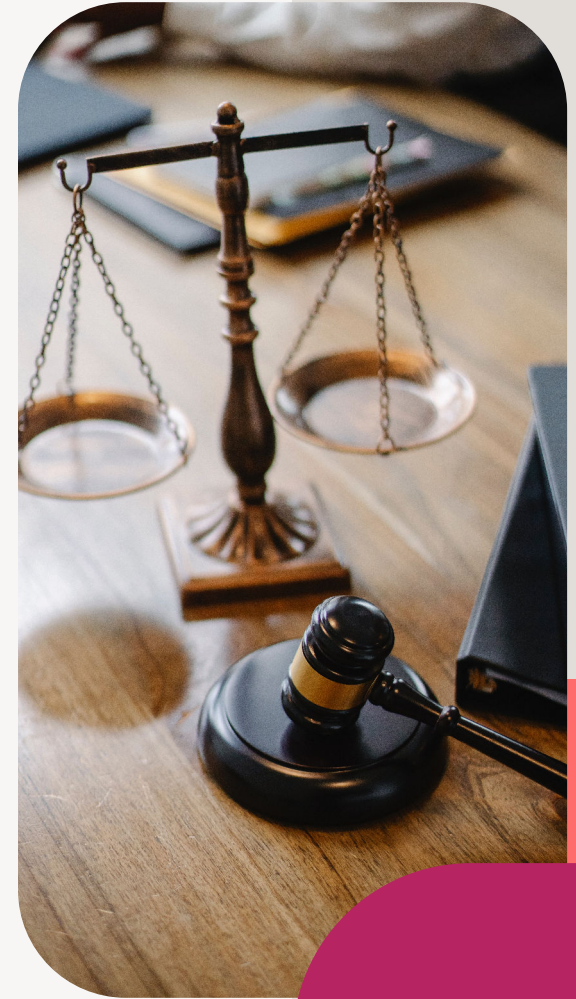


# Resources on Campus: Connecting with Counseling



- Develop a connection with the center
  - Know basic information and share it with students.
    - Hours, processes, insurance/payment, scheduling appointments
- Familiarize yourself with their experience working with culturally diverse individuals
  - List specific contacts to refer students to if applicable
    - Based on language and cultural experience
- Establish programing
  - Early in the year and throughout
- Highlight Counseling Center events through newsletters, social media, etc.

# Immigration Implications





# Legal Consequences



- Fines
- Arrest or jail time
- Criminal record
- Employment issues



# Federal Consequences



- Visa renewal denial
- Port of entry problems
- SEVIS record termination
  - Institutional dismissal
  - Federal agency
- Visa cancellation
- ICE and deportation

# Institutional Responsibilities



- Age restrictions
- Federal and state laws/ consequences
- Institutional responsibilities
  - SEVIS/DOS reporting
  - Consistent guidelines/ policies
  - SEVIS termination
- Loss of scholarships (SACM)



everything  
is  
connected

# Effective Programming

# Institutional Partnerships

- Counseling Center
- Public Safety
- Welcome Event



- Email reminders
- Student Life
- MultiCultural Center



# Informational Programming

- Orientation
- Welcome Event
- NAFSA Booklet

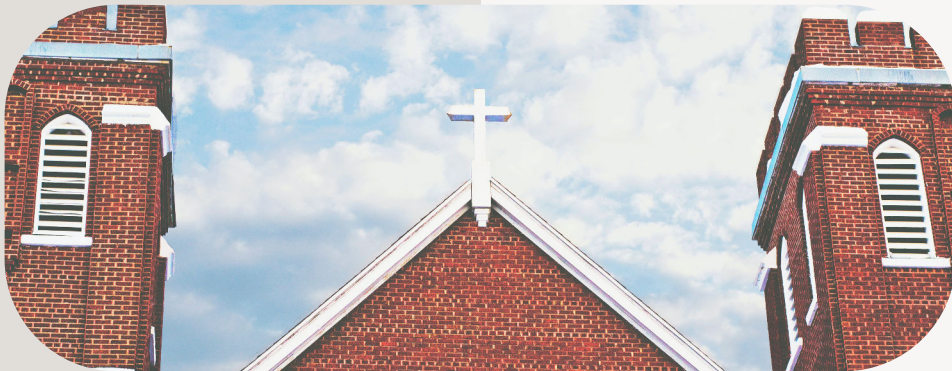


- Email blasts
- Information Videos
- Social Media





# Working with External Partners



# Community Partners

- Counseling Centers
- Outpatient treatment options
- Support Groups
  - Alcoholics Anonymous
  - Narcotics Anonymous
  - Al-Anon
- Religious centers/churches





# Insurance Explored & Resources

# Insurance Considerations

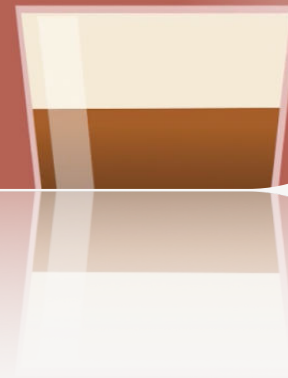
- Health insurance should cover mental health
  - Verify coverage (i.e., internal limits, day maximum, etc.)
  - Includes coverage for substance abuse
  - Injuries/illnesses as a result of intoxication/drug abuse
  - Suicide/attempted suicide
  - Provider network
- Telecounseling
  - Increasing in popularity
  - 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





# Drug & Alcohol Video

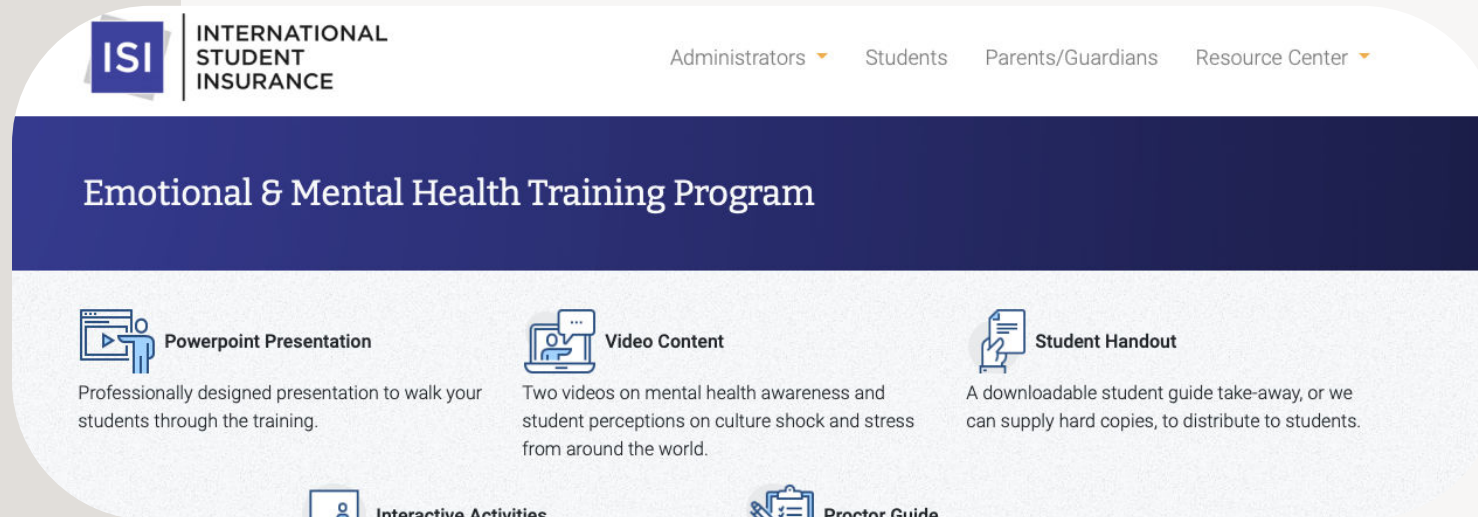
What International Students  
Need to Know About  
Drugs & Alcohol



[https://  
www.internationalstudentinsur  
ance.com/explained/drugs-  
and-alcohol-video.php](https://www.internationalstudentinsurance.com/explained/drugs-and-alcohol-video.php)

# Training Program

## Sexual Assault & Mental Health Training Programs




The screenshot shows the ISI International Student Insurance website. At the top, the ISI logo is on the left, and navigation links for Administrators, Students, Parents/Guardians, and Resource Center are on the right. Below this is a dark blue header with the text "Emotional & Mental Health Training Program". The main content area features four resource cards: "Powerpoint Presentation" (with a play button icon), "Video Content" (with a video camera icon), "Student Handout" (with a document icon), and "Interactive Activities" (with a person icon). Each card has a brief description of the resource.

**ISI** INTERNATIONAL STUDENT INSURANCE


Administrators ▾ Students Parents/Guardians Resource Center ▾

### Emotional & Mental Health Training Program




**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.



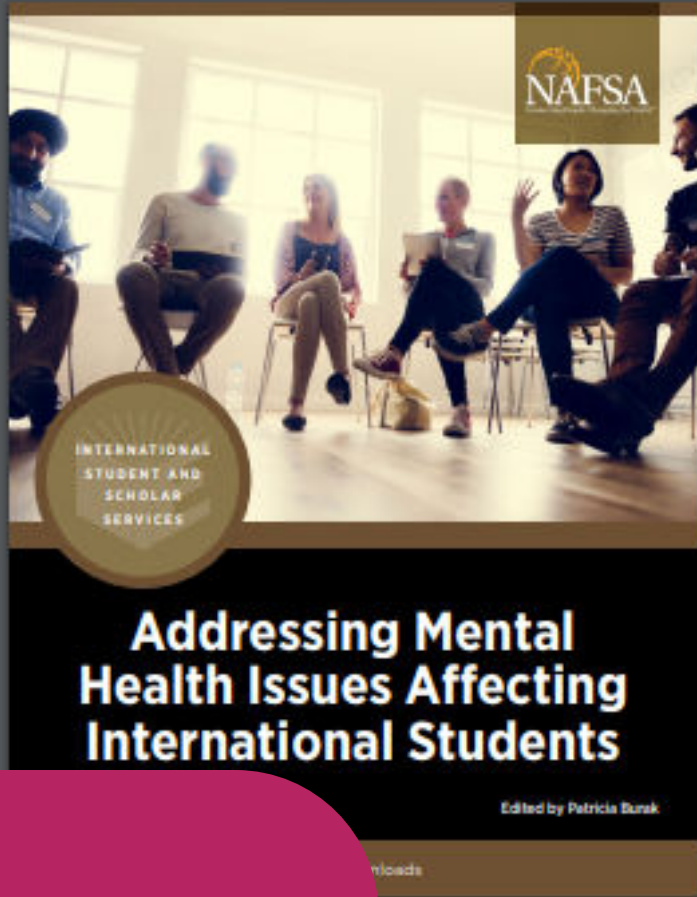
**Interactive Activities**



**Proctor Guide**

In partnership with

- MGH Center for Cross-Cultural Student Emotional Wellness
- RAINN
- International Student Insurance



# Resources

- Massachusetts General Hospital Center for Cross-Cultural Student Emotional Wellness (MGH CCCSEW)
- NAFSA Booklet: Crisis Management in a Cross Cultural Setting: ISSS
- NAFSA Booklet: Addressing Mental Health Issues Affecting International Students

# Services & Hotlines

## Hotlines

- 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline
  - 988
  - [988lifeline.org](https://988lifeline.org)
- 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](http://www.itgetsbetter.org/pages/get-help)

## Services

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





# Discussion Q&A





**Thank You**