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Here's where college students and parents can get help with mental health

Morgan Watkins, Louisville Courier Journal Published 6:26 a.m. ET Oct. 7, 2019 | Updated 6:29 a.m. ET Oct. 7, 2019

More college students in Kentucky and across America are asking for help with their mental health, and universities are trying to support as many as can with an often-limited stable of resources.

Over the past five years, at least seven universities in the commonwealth provided therapy services to a swelling number of students seeking help, according to interviews with and data provided by college officials.

And the Center for Collegiate Mental Health at Penn State's (<https://ccmh.psu.edu/>) data shows a growing percentage of students seen by college counseling centers in recent years reported they had seriously considered suicide.

If you're having thoughts of suicide, you can get immediate support — day or night — by calling the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (<https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/>) at 1-800-273-8255 or contacting the Crisis Text Line (<https://www.crisistextline.org/>) by texting HOME to 74174

You also can ring Centerstone Kentucky's (<https://centerstone.org/state/kentucky/>) adult crisis line at 502-589-4313.

If you're transgender (or questioning whether you might be trans) and you're in crisis, you can call Trans Lifeline (<https://www.translifeline.org/>)'s peer support hotline at 877-565-8860.

More on this project: As more students deal with mental health issues, colleges stretched thin in offering help (</story/news/education/2019/10/07/mental-health-students-rely-on-colleges-with-limited-resources/1878332001/>)

How parents can help

If you're worried your child might be thinking about suicide, don't avoid talking to them about it, says Mary Bolin, the director of the University of Kentucky's counseling center.

"There's a myth that if we talk about suicide, we'll give somebody the idea," Bolin told The Courier Journal.

"If deep down in your gut you feel like something is not right, something is probably not right," she said. "And you don't know unless you ask."

Even if it turns out you've misread the situation, broaching the subject of mental health with your kid will open the door for you to connect with them.

And you might find out your gut was right and your child is struggling — and then you'll have the opportunity to help them.

According to the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, warning signs to watch for in your child (or someone else you care about) include:

- Talking about killing themselves, feeling hopeless, feeling trapped, having no reason to live, being a burden to others or in unbearable pain
- Increasing their use of drugs or alcohol

- Withdrawing from activities or isolating themselves from their family and friends
- Sleeping too much or too little
- Giving away their prized possessions or contacting people to say goodbye

Bolin offered a few tips for how to talk with someone about their mental health.

If they share difficult things with you, don't break their confidence unless there's an immediate risk to their safety (such as if they're considering suicide), she said.

She also suggested avoiding saying things like, "I know how you feel," because people respond differently even to similar situations, and she cautioned against trying to talk someone out of feeling depressed or anxious.

Those things can accidentally minimize someone's feelings and make them feel more isolated. Instead, she recommended sharing your concern by telling them things like: "I'm worried that you are feeling so sad or hopeless."

A suicide prevention campaign called "Seize the Awkward" also is encouraging young adults not to shy away from talking to their friends if they're worried about them.

For more tips on how to talk to someone you love about mental health, check out [SeizeTheAwkward.org \(https://seizetheawkward.org/#get-help\)](https://seizetheawkward.org/#get-help).

More on this project: [As more students deal with mental health issues, colleges stretched thin in offering help \(/story/news/education/2019/10/07/mental-health-students-rely-on-colleges-with-limited-resources/1878332001/\)](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/education/2019/10/07/mental-health-students-rely-on-colleges-with-limited-resources/1878332001/)

Local resources for students

Here are local sources of support available to students struggling with mental health at the following Kentucky universities, including details on how to reach their counseling centers. (These centers also will help you if you just walk into their office.)

In an emergency, dial 911 or call the college's police department or public safety office.

- University of Louisville
 - [Counseling Center \(https://louisville.edu/counseling/\)](https://louisville.edu/counseling/): 502-852-6585
 - [Police Department \(http://louisville.edu/police/\)](http://louisville.edu/police/): 502-852-6111
 - The [PEACC Center \(https://louisville.edu/peacc\)](https://louisville.edu/peacc) provides support to students who've been sexually harassed or assaulted; it can be reached at 502-852-2663.
 - The ConcernCenter is an online directory, available at [louisville.concerncenter.com \(http://louisville.concerncenter.com\)](http://louisville.concerncenter.com), that helps students locate campus resources.
- University of Kentucky
 - [Counseling Center \(https://www.uky.edu/counselingcenter/\)](https://www.uky.edu/counselingcenter/): 859-257-8701
 - [Police Department \(https://www.uky.edu/police/ukpd-home\)](https://www.uky.edu/police/ukpd-home): 859-257-8573
 - Contact the [Violence Intervention and Prevention Center \(https://www.uky.edu/vipcenter/\)](https://www.uky.edu/vipcenter/), which helps students who've been sexually harassed or assaulted, at 859-257-3574.
- Bellarmine University
 - [Counseling Center \(https://www.bellarmino.edu/studentaffairs/counselingcenter/\)](https://www.bellarmino.edu/studentaffairs/counselingcenter/): 502-272-8480
 - [Office of Public Safety \(https://www.bellarmino.edu/security/\)](https://www.bellarmino.edu/security/): 502-272-7777
- Berea College
 - [Counseling Services \(https://www.berea.edu/cs/\)](https://www.berea.edu/cs/): 859-985-3212
 - [Department of Public Safety \(https://www.berea.edu/public-safety/\)](https://www.berea.edu/public-safety/): 859-985-3333
- Centre College
 - [Student Health and Counseling \(https://www.centre.edu/offices/student-health-and-counseling/\)](https://www.centre.edu/offices/student-health-and-counseling/): 859-238-5530
 - [Department of Public Safety \(https://www.centre.edu/offices/public-safety-dps/\)](https://www.centre.edu/offices/public-safety-dps/): 859-236-4357
- Eastern Kentucky University

- [Counseling Center \(https://counselingcenter.eku.edu/\)](https://counselingcenter.eku.edu/): 859-622-1303
- [Police Department \(https://counselingcenter.eku.edu/crisis-services\)](https://counselingcenter.eku.edu/crisis-services): 859-622-1111
- Kentucky State University
 - [Student Health Services \(https://kysu.edu/administration-governance/enrollment-management-and-student-engagement/h-services/\)](https://kysu.edu/administration-governance/enrollment-management-and-student-engagement/h-services/): 502-597-6277
 - To set an appointment with a mental health counselor, you also can call 502-597-6271.
 - [Police Department \(https://kysu.edu/administration-governance/president/safety-security/\)](https://kysu.edu/administration-governance/president/safety-security/): 502-597-6878
- Morehead State University
 - [Counseling Center \(https://www.moreheadstate.edu/Student-Services/Counseling-Health-Services/MSU-Counseling-Center\)](https://www.moreheadstate.edu/Student-Services/Counseling-Health-Services/MSU-Counseling-Center): 606-783-2123
 - [Police Department \(https://www.moreheadstate.edu/police\)](https://www.moreheadstate.edu/police): 606-783-2035
- Murray State University
 - [University Counseling Services \(https://www.murraystate.edu/headermenu/administration/StudentAffairs/departments/counseling/index.aspx\)](https://www.murraystate.edu/headermenu/administration/StudentAffairs/departments/counseling/index.aspx): 270-809-68
 - [Police Department \(https://www.murraystate.edu/headermenu/Offices/police/index.aspx\)](https://www.murraystate.edu/headermenu/Offices/police/index.aspx): 270-809-2222
 - Contact the university's [Women's Center \(https://www.murraystate.edu/headermenu/administration/StudentAffairs/departments/WomensCenter/index.aspx\)](https://www.murraystate.edu/headermenu/administration/StudentAffairs/departments/WomensCenter/index.aspx), which offers support for students who've been sexually harassed or assaulted, at 270-809-3016.
- Spalding University
 - [Counseling Center \(https://my.spalding.edu/depts/sdcl/counselingcenter/Pages/Counseling%20and%20Psychological%20Services%20\(CAPS\)\)](https://my.spalding.edu/depts/sdcl/counselingcenter/Pages/Counseling%20and%20Psychological%20Services%20(CAPS)): 502-873-4486 / Email caps@spalding.edu
 - [Campus Safety \(https://www.spalding.edu/campus-safety/\)](https://www.spalding.edu/campus-safety/): 502-873-4444
- Transylvania University
 - [Counseling Services \(http://www.transy.edu/campus/health-services/counseling\)](http://www.transy.edu/campus/health-services/counseling): 859-281-3682
 - [Department of Public Safety \(http://www.transy.edu/campus/safety/meet-dps\)](http://www.transy.edu/campus/safety/meet-dps): 859-233-8118
- Western Kentucky University
 - [Counseling Center \(https://www.wku.edu/heretohelp/\)](https://www.wku.edu/heretohelp/): 270-745-3159
 - [Police Department \(https://www.wku.edu/police/\)](https://www.wku.edu/police/): 270-745-2548

Opinion: [Mental illness and suicide affect all demographics, but there's hope \(/story/opinion/2019/05/23/mental-health-awareness-month-these-issues-affect-everyone/3749645002/\)](https://www.wku.edu/story/opinion/2019/05/23/mental-health-awareness-month-these-issues-affect-everyone/3749645002/)

Depression and anxiety disorders are treatable, and it's important to reach out for help.

According to the National Institute of Mental Health, you [may be suffering from depression \(https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/depression-what-you-need-to-know/index.shtml\)](https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/depression-what-you-need-to-know/index.shtml) if you've had any of these signs and symptoms for at least two weeks:

- Persistent sad, anxious or “empty” mood
- Feelings of hopelessness, pessimism
- Feelings of guilt, worthlessness, helplessness
- Loss of interest or pleasure in hobbies and activities
- Decreased energy, fatigue, being "slowed down"
- Difficulty concentrating, remembering, making decisions
- Difficulty sleeping, early-morning awakening, or oversleeping
- Appetite and/or weight changes
- Thoughts of death or suicide, suicide attempts
- Restlessness, irritability
- Persistent physical symptoms

Bolin suggested looking at the intensity, frequency and duration of your symptoms.

Most people will have brief periods where they feel anxious, she said, but if it's overwhelming, happening more often or preventing you from enjoying everyday life, that's an indicator you should seek help.

"If that stays with you all the time, that's impairing your daily function," she explained.

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About this story

Courier Journal reporter Morgan Watkins spent four months delving into college students' struggles with mental health in Kentucky and around the country. She collected data from various universities and interviewed college officials to learn more about how they're trying to meet students' rising demand for therapy despite limited resources. She also interviewed parents who've lost their children to suicide as well as several students who opened up about what it's like to deal with depression and anxiety.

Mental health impacts college students' lives in myriad ways, and ensuring students reach out for and receive the support they need can save lives. Courier Journal is committed to covering this issue over the long term.

This is one of a series of stories The Courier Journal will be publishing on mental health in the coming months. We welcome you to follow our coverage and share your own experiences with and concerns about mental health issues, especially those affecting college students in Kentucky.

Feel free to contact reporter Morgan Watkins by calling her at 502-582-4502 or emailing her at mwatkins@gannett.com.

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