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**Interactive Online Resource Center Helps Families Make Healthy Transitions into College Life**

**ARLINGTON, Va. (June 3, 2010)** –The American Psychiatric Foundation is partnering with the Jed Foundation to launch [The Transition Year](#), an innovative new campaign that helps students and their families focus on emotional health before, during and after the college transition. At the center of the campaign is a free, customizable online resource center [www.transitionyear.org](http://www.transitionyear.org).

For most young people, college represents independence, exploration and growth, and The Transition Year can help parents and students understand and embrace those life transitions. The program also includes specific information and resources for families with a student who has emerging mental health problems or a previously diagnosed condition.

“The pressure of college and a new environment can trigger issues lying beneath the surface,” says Richard Harding, M.D., president of The American Psychiatric Foundation. “When unaddressed, mental health problems can lead to dangerous behaviors like substance abuse and thoughts of suicide, which is the second leading cause of death among college students.”

According to research from the American College Health Association, emotional issues like depression, anxiety and stress, are leading impediments to academic success among college students. Additionally, data from a 2009 study by The Jed Foundation, mtvU and the Associated Press found that half of all college students had been too stressed to function academically or socially over the last semester. The same survey found that 13 percent of college students had been diagnosed with a mental health condition at some point in their lives and that 10 percent reported signs of moderate to severe depression.

“The research shows that emotional health issues ranging from relationship issues to medical conditions like depression are top reasons students struggle in college,” says Courtney Knowles, The Jed Foundation Executive Director. “We spend so much time, energy and money as families and communities getting young people to college, and if we overlook the emotional aspect of that transition, we are not protecting that investment and our students’ futures.”

The Transition Year Project is using the latest research and technology to help parents and families navigate the transition into college and beyond with a focus on emotional health. Free resources and tools are available at [www.transitionyear.org](http://www.transitionyear.org) and include:

- Articles and resources that help parents and students understand and prepare for the emotional transition into college life.

- more -

- “My Transition Year” tools that let families create a personality profile for students and then complete a “Right Fit Worksheet” for each prospective school so that emotional health and wellness are considered during the college selection process. Tools that help parents and students collect contact information for campus services related to wellness and emotional health.
- Information and checklists that help parents and students differentiate between manageable emotional challenges related to the college transition and signs of a potentially larger problem.
- Specific information and resources for families of students with a diagnosed mental health condition that help with issues like transferring care and treatment adherence to make it more likely these students will thrive at college.

[The American Psychiatric Foundation](#) is the philanthropic and educational arm of the [American Psychiatric Association](#). The mission of the foundation is to advance understanding that mental illnesses are real and can be effectively treated.

[The Jed Foundation](#) is the leading nonprofit organization working to promote emotional health and prevent suicide among college students. The Jed Foundation has built a reputation for connecting with college-age students through initiatives like the Peabody Award-winning Half of Us campaign ([www.halfofus.com](http://www.halfofus.com)) with mtvU and ULifeline ([www.ulifeline.org](http://www.ulifeline.org)), an online resource where students can get campus-specific resources and take an anonymous screening test.

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### **THE TRANSITION YEAR PROJECT: PARENT PERCEPTIONS**

The Transition Year Project is a partnership of The Jed Foundation and the American Psychiatric Foundation highlighting the unique challenges to students' emotional health during and after the transition into college. The Parent Survey was given to over 1,000 parents of high school juniors/seniors or college freshmen/sophomores. The survey explored how parents think about mental health, both in general and as it relates to their college-age children.

#### **PARENT SURVEY: KEY FINDINGS**

##### **The Discomfort Factor**

- Parents are less comfortable talking with their children about mental health than any other health topic presented, including alcohol and drugs and sexual health, and less comfortable discussing suicidal thoughts than other mental health issues.

##### **Grappling with Misunderstanding and Stigma**

- Half of all parents believe that a teen with a mental health problem could "pull themselves together if they wanted to."
- Almost one-third of parents would not be comfortable if people outside their family knew their teen had a mental health problem and expect that others would avoid their children if it became known.

##### **Misperception and Missing Critical Clues**

- Almost 85% of parents say they would know at what point to seek professional help if they were concerned that their children were experiencing a mental health problem.
- More than 90% of parents say they would be able to tell if their children were exhibiting signs of depression. However, when asked to name signals of depression in teens, only 3.4% identified suicidal thoughts, and only 15% of parents were able to name more than one or two signs.

##### **During College Search, Mental Health is Off the Radar**

- More than half of all parents say a school's mental health services had little or no influence on the college selection process.
- Only 25% of parents report receiving information from their children's current or prospective college(s) about mental health services.

##### **Disparity in Gender Roles and Expectations**

- Mothers take the lead in connecting with their children about emotional health.
- Parents of female children are more likely to feel very comfortable discussing health topics with them than parents of male children.
- Almost two-thirds of parents do not think that their children are likely to experience a mental health problem while in college. However, over 90% of parents believe that any teen can develop a mental health problem.

For recommendations and more information, visit [www.transitionyear.org](http://www.transitionyear.org).



**TRANSITION YEAR**  
Your Source for  
**Emotional Health at College**

**Tips for Choosing the Right College**

**Dig deep to determine if a school has the right “personality” for you, and the right resources to back it up:**

1. Be thoughtful and honest about what you need in a college. Ask yourself:
  - Do big classes spell less pressure, or more isolation?
  - Are you better suited to a community of people who feel ‘just like you?’ Or would you thrive in a diverse environment?
  - What’s the social tone of the school? How do students make friends and blow off steam?
2. While at college, students often have some big issues to deal with. Find out more about who will help when parents are far away.
  - Who are the Resident Advisor (RA) and how do students interact with them?
  - Does the school offer programs — like workshops or talks — about mental health and wellness?
  - What kinds of counseling and support will students find at the campus health center? Is there someone to talk to if a student needs a person besides parents and friends to listen?

**Tips for A Smooth Transition**

**Adjusting to college life requires dealing with many new things at the same time. Here are some tips for settling in:**

1. Dorms and the transition to independent living:
  - Keep the lines of communication open. Make sure you and your roommate understand each other’s expectations.
  - Set ground rules for drinking, smoking, bringing friends over, sleepovers, sharing food and clothing, music and TV.
  - Share personal information, preferences and pet peeves, so your roommate will be able to read your signals.
2. A new social scene:
  - Choose quality over volume of social commitments.
  - Try new groups on, but consider waiting one semester before fully committing.
  - Whatever group you choose, make sure it’s a healthy environment, one you can balance with your academic responsibilities.
3. The academic transition:
  - Talk to your advisor about your academic priorities, study environment, and how to maximize school resources.
  - Find healthy ways to blow off steam.
  - If you need special support, don’t wait to get it, whether through study groups, teaching assistants, or a tutor.