

# The college transition

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Parents of high school graduates who will be college freshmen in the fall may be already worrying how they can help prepare their student, especially since parenting a college student is not what it used to be.

For today's college students, the world is different. Students are not always able to earn enough at a summer job or part-time college job to keep up with expenses. With e-mail and cell phones, most students are in touch with family members multiple times a week. You will probably be more involved in your college student's life than your parents were with you if you attended college.

Students should know some basic life skills before heading off to college. If you haven't taken time to teach your child some basic skills during their growing up years, use the summer months to work on this. How to do laundry, mending clothes, managing a debit or credit card, basic cleaning, cooking and food safety are all helpful skills to know.

Also explain how the family's health insurance works, what to do if they get sick and how to manage financial aid or loans. You may want to set up a specific time to have a discussion with your child on these topics.

You have probably talked with your child in the past about your expectations related to partying, chemical use, sex, academic achievement and other issues related to personal responsibility and safety. If not, start these conversations now. They will remember these conversations and your values even if they may sometimes make other choices.

As your student begins college, you must trust your child to make good decisions. Whether students are living on campus or at home, they will face new challenges, enjoy new experiences and increasingly take steps toward independence. You can be assured that the lessons you've taught and the standards and values that you've set for the past 18 years will have an impact on the choices he or she makes. Students do consider their parents' values, even as they test their limits and take new risks.

Parents should be available to provide support and be a sounding board for their child, not to solve the problem for them. Your role is to listen, to understand that your student is concerned and to provide encouragement and advice. Visit your student's college website for specific resources and support available on their campus and attend parent orientation sessions if they are available.

You have only a few more weeks to pass along advice and help to your child while they are in your home. But remember, your continued communication and encouragement is important throughout the college years

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*File: college-transition.pdf*