

Parent's Introduction to College Safety

Presented by

CollegeSAFE.com

This guide is a free bonus for **The College Safety Guide**,
an ebook published by www.collegesafe.com

Congratulations! Your Student is Enrolled in College.

You made it! The hardest part is over. Through it all, you've experienced the overwhelming college selection process to find there are so many things as parents you cannot control - the tuition, the college location, the dorm options, the teaching staff, the class schedule, the school calendar and the challenges of parking on campus. This is your student's new life, and you want the best for them. Collegesafe.com understands this and offers "**The College Safety Guide**" to provide parents and students control about their safety planning for college. If your student is just preparing for college, the good news is that by starting today, you can prepare your student for a safe and happy experience at college before they even begin the semester. If your student is already at college, chances are that they have already heard enough college crime horror stories to give any parent the chills.

College Preparation Includes Safety

Preparing for college is an exciting yet challenging time for everyone involved. Students will be adjusting to major changes in every part of their lives while parents are left with empty rooms and long distance relationships with their children. A part of the reality of this situation is a concern for safety. This includes safety from violent crime, assault, accidents, stalking, identity theft and more. It may be shocking to find out that many of these crimes are far more common on college campuses than out in the real world. College students are far too often the victims of crime. For this reason, **Collegesafe.com**, a division of Main Street Safety has written an e-book called "**The College Safety Guide**" found at <http://www.collegesafe.com>.

Before your student leaves for college, take that opportunity to sit down face to face and have a heart-felt discussion about college safety. Keep in mind that this may be an emotional time for all of you. Your soon- to- be college student may be a nervous bundle of energy and may think that you are treating him or her like a child. Reassure him or her that you care about her/him and that you want them to have the best possible experiences at college. Ask her questions and find out what their concerns may be. The first step in any safety plan is to keep the lines of communication open with your student. This guide will offer a basic outline of material to cover and the use of real-life situations that can be shared for mutual discussion on crime prevention and safety tips. In addition, you will now have the tools necessary to begin preparing a custom safety plan for your college student.

Safety 101 for College Freshmen

If your student is going to be attending college for the first time, this safety guide is especially important. Freshmen at college are focused targets for thieves in waiting. Think about it: the confusion of moving into a new place with expensive items, not knowing friendly faces from strangers, and not knowing the campus or local area. This chaos is a perfect storm for many local thieves, from among fellow students and from outside campus. In addition, the campus security staff is just gearing up to promote campus safety and awareness campaigns have only just begun for the semester.

Many students just entering college treat the dorms just like rooms at home – trusting everyone who enters the building and not locking their dorm rooms or their cars. Freshman need to learn that college is not just like home, it is the outside world and extra safety precautions need to be taken. When a student knows about these differences, then it is more likely their entire college experience will be a safe one.

Theft and assault happens at every college. All the safety rules and security alarms are worthless if the student does not participate in the overall safety plan. This is where you come in as parents. This guide gives you the information to take the initiative and develop a college safety plan with your student. Consider it an important part of “freshman orientation” that YOU share with your student before they even move into their dorm.

REALITY CHECK – FRESHMAN TARGETED

Just take a look at these headlines from September and October of 2003:

SEXUAL ASSAULT

October 19, 2003, Concordia University, St. Paul, Minnesota

A female student was raped in her dorm room – The alleged assailant entered the dorm through an open window by removing the screen of an open window in the common area of the dorm. The victim was in a single dorm room and since there does not appear to have been forced entry into the room, it is also possible the dorm room was unlocked. The University of St. Thomas, a college nearby, also reported four sexual assaults on campus since the beginning of the semester.

COULD THIS HAVE BEEN PREVENTED?

- Lock all windows in the dorm, including common areas.
- Lock your dorm room at night and when you are away from your dorm room.
- Close and lock all dorm room windows at night and when you are away.
- For added protection, the college could install motion or vibration detectors on the windows in the common areas and dorm rooms.
- Dorms could have door alarms.
- What YOU can do as a parent: ask about the dorm security systems and rules where your student will be living.
- Where necessary, set up mobile security in the dorm room. This includes wireless systems for the entire room, door alarms and window alarms.

DORM THEFT

October 17, 2003 – Tufts University, Medford, Massachusetts

Within the few weeks of the beginning of the semester, campus police received reports of 11 lap top thefts – many of which were taken from unlocked dorm rooms. The police reported that none of these thefts showed forced signs of entry. One particular dorm reported three thefts during the first week of September. Thieves entered unlocked dorm rooms to steal wallets and other

valuables. There were also reports of strangers entering unlocked dorm rooms presumably looking for someone and then just leaving.

COULD THIS HAVE BEEN PREVENTED?

- Lock all windows in the dorm, including common areas.
- Lock your dorm room when you are away from your dorm room.
- Close and lock all dorm room windows when you are away.
- Report any suspicious activity, such as strangers entering the dorm rooms.
- Engrave valuables such as laptops. Many universities have this service available.
- Consider laptop tracking or security options such as LapTrak software or computer cables. LapTrak software can track your computer down if it is lost or stolen.
- Don't leave valuables in plain view at any time and especially when you are in the process of moving and setting up a dorm room.
- Consider using diversion safes or other methods of concealing valuables.

ALCOHOL ABUSE

According to the National Advisory Council on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, every year:

- 500,000 collage age students are injured while under the influence of alcohol
- 600,000 are assaulted by another student that had been drinking
- 1,400 college students die each year because of injuries caused by alcohol abuse
- 70,000 are victims of sexual assault or date rape where alcohol is a factor
- 400,000 have unprotected sex when intoxicated
- 25% have problems in class, such as missing class, missing assignments and doing badly on exams because of alcohol
- 2.1 million say that they drove a car while intoxicated
- 31% meet the criteria for a diagnosis for alcohol abuse according to surveys

WHAT CAN PARENTS AND STUDENTS DO ABOUT THIS?

Communication with your student before and after he or she starts college has a huge impact on whether or not alcohol abuse will be a factor in their college life. According to the National Advisory Council on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA) the first six weeks of a student's stay on campus is crucial. With lots of free time and few rules (compared to home) many students start drinking to excess during this time period. Drinking can interfere with them adapting successfully to college life. About a third of first year students do not register for their second year. NIAAA recommends that parents call their son or daughter often during their fist six weeks.

We recommend that you read the parent's guide first for an introduction, and then the entire e-book "**The College Safety Guide**". The e-book is full of details, stories and resources to include in your discussion with your student. Finally, after reading the guide and e-book, we encourage you to prepare a checklist of safety tips for your student that is customized for their college location

and experience. At least three parties should have this checklist; you, your student, a close relative/friend and as an option, a resident assistant at the college.

A side benefit of this process is that you are preparing this with your college student. You receive two downloads of “**The College Safety Guide**” so that you can both print them out and share them on different computers. Ideally, the student’s copy should be on the laptop or computer they will be bringing to college. That way they can refer back to it as they need to. It is an important experience to share with them and for you to have a better understanding of what their lifestyle will be like once they are away at college. In addition, all of you will have a clear appreciation and understanding of the safety resources and programs available at the college.

Once the checklist is prepared, you will have an idea of the safety resources you will need to complement the campus security program at the college. For your convenience, “**The College Safety Guide**” has a list of resources for products and services that you may find helpful. Some of the companies listed have a business relationship with us, yet many others are strictly recommendations. They will be noted accordingly. You are always encouraged to prepare your own research for safety resources that will benefit your college student.

COMMUNICATION

Your child is going to college. Whether the college is across town or across the country it seems like it is a million miles away. How do you keep the lines of communication open so that they still feel connected? It can be tricky to talk to your student without them feeling smothered, judged or not trusted. We want to support them without alienating them.

Here is a list of fun things to do to let them know that they are not totally on their own. Send stuff to share with their roommates. Follow this list and come up with your own ideas and you will be known by your kid’s roommates and friends as “the cool parent”. Fun stuff will also help your student make friends with his or her new roommates and make the transition from kid at home to adult at college much easier. This list contains many fun and simple things to surprise and delight them and help them adjust to their new world.

We want them to grow and develop self-confidence. That takes a strong foundation. We want them to feel free to call and chat about anything and everything. Communication builds strong emotional health and self-confidence. This creates a pattern of success and gives your kids the strength to avoid drugs and alcohol abuse and promiscuity. They have the self-confidence and the knowledge to avoid potentially dangerous situations.

Look at the list below and keep your student in mind. Some of the things on the list will be totally off base for your student and other things might be dead on. Use the list to help generate ideas for fun things for your student. After all you know your kid better than we do. Think about what they like and dislike and what would be fun for them. Then create your own custom plan, tailored to your student’s likes and dislikes and you are on your way to becoming an awesome college parent.

FUN COMMUNICATION IDEAS:

- Use email and instant messaging
- Send subscription to hometown newspaper (or forward the local community publication)
- Exchange joke of the day by email
- Play games online - sign up as teams or competitors
- Webcams - on both sides (g-rated only!)
- Cell phone cameras - on both sides to instantly share family pictures
- Funky family photo stuff with funny pictures - put on calendars, mugs, magnets, poster size cut up into a big jigsaw puzzle
- Ofoto.com and other services let you post photographs and digital pictures on the web so that you can share them over the internet
- Tape record a dinner conversation where you include them in the conversation
- When you visit get gift certificates to restaurants in the area and send them later (sometimes these can be ordered online)
- Every once in a while send rolls of quarters for laundry
- Send custom family ecards or funny ecards (links needed)
- Share weekly film trivia of favorite movies after both parties watch them
- Have younger siblings or cousins send fridge drawings or write letters or emails
- Send them a digital picture frame with audio. They can look at the picture and then listen to the voices of home
- Set up a family website with weekly updates of stories and pictures
- Send postcards from home state with funny stories or jokes on them
- Send personal basket with absolute favorite items
- Exchange and create word puzzles with younger siblings
- Parents can exchange their own school war stories weekly with their student via mail or email
- Send them print or emailed links to funny off-beat stories they can share with friends
- Mail them popcorn of the month, cookie basket of the month or other special treats
- Put together gift baskets
- Send monogrammed towels the towels that they left with have probably disappeared already
- Put together a fun family journal by email - both parties contribute.
- Pull together family's famous quotes like "wait until your father gets home" etc.....
- Encourage student to email or send pictures of friends with brief descriptions and meet them when you visit

WEBSITE LINKS FOR COMMUNICATIONS PRODUCTS AND SERVICES:

Photo magnets and photo cookies:

<http://www.magnetqueen.com>

Cookies:

<http://www.dancingdeer.com> (all natural and kosher)

<http://www.yumcookies.com>

<http://www.chipndough.com>

Snacks and Candy:

<http://www.sweetsinbloom.com>

<http://www.thepopcornfactory.com>

Baskets/Kits:

<http://www.dormkit.com>

<http://www.dormpac.com>

<http://www.nollegecarepackages.com>

<http://www.care4college.com>

<http://www.collegecarepackage.com/>

Fun Cards:

<http://www.goaskanyone.com>

Fun E-Cards:

<http://www.beatgreet.com/>

<http://www.bluemountainarts.com>

<http://www.funnypostcard.com/>

<http://www.funnygreetings.com/>

<http://www.funnygreetings.net>

<http://www.happybirthdaytoyou.com>

<http://www.123greetings.com>

<http://www.funnypop.com>

SUMMARY

In summary, here are the steps we recommend you share with your student:

- 1) Read “**The College Safety Guide**”.
- 2) Research safety programs and options at the college
- 3) Review the student’s campus lifestyle for areas that require safety planning with the help of the College Safety Survey chapter.
- 4) Prepare and distribute a customized “Safety Plan”
- 5) Select related college safety resources, services or products for your student.
- 6) Review with your student how to use these safety resources, services or products.
- 7) Keep the communication going during the college years.