Message from Amy Molloy, Project Director

This edition of Healthy Young Minds is about transitioning from High School to college and career. I’ve been reflecting on the idea of “transition” as I embark on my own. In the coming weeks, MHANYS will welcome a new Project Director to lead the School Mental Health Resource and Training Center. I have truly loved my work in this position but a family relocation requires me to step back. I’m grateful for the opportunity to continue to support the mission of MHANYS as a consultant.

It’s amazing to realize that the Resource Center was launched nearly 3 years ago. With support from an incredible Board of Directors, and partnerships with our affiliate network and education stakeholders across NYS, MHANYS staff have made a tremendous impact on raising mental health literacy of students, families and caregivers, educators and school staff. On a personal level, I’ve learned along the way, as well. Like many, I’ve become more comfortable with technology and learned to connect with my network of supporters even while social distancing. Early in Covid, I discovered Qigong as a self-care strategy to support my physical wellness and clear my mind. In some ways, the challenges of the past 15+ months have better prepared me to make this transition by requiring me to slow down, practice self-care and focus on my relationships with family and friends. My hope is that our students will reflect on the experiences of the past year and embrace their resilience, as well.

Our Healthy Young Minds publication is full of excellent resources and ideas to support our youth as they embark on their own transitions from post-secondary education, including stories of lived experience, notable statistics, policy recommendations and practical resources. As a parent of three young adults who each navigated this their own way, we definitely would have benefitted from the narratives and information contained here. Please take some time to read this edition together and include mental health in your conversations this summer.

Take care,

Amy Molloy

Message from Glenn Liebman, CEO

As you can see from Amy’s message, she will be leaving the position as Director of the MHANYS School Mental Health Resource and Training Center. When we asked Amy to take this position three years ago, we had no idea what it would be like given that there has never been a job quite like this before. The Resource Center and the mandating of mental health instruction in school were all new concepts.

To say that Amy hit a home run would be an understatement. Her knowledge, passion and vision created a Center that was a wonderful resource for schools, families and the community. She and her team at MHANYS recognized that the Resource Center was more than just about insuring mental health instruction in schools---it was about changing school cultures to make them reflect a climate of wellness and good mental health. Many schools were already doing great work in that arena but Amy and her team worked to be even more inclusive of these strategies.

Also, recognizing the impact of COVID to students and families, under Amy’s leadership, we provided over a hundred webinars, panel discussions and meetings to over ten thousand individuals, about the impact of COVID in school settings. I could go on and on about her contributions but needless to say, we at MHANYS are so appreciative of all her great work and wisdom that she has provided to schools and to the community.

-Glenn-
(CONTINUED ONTO NEXT PAGE)
My College Journey: Success, Failure, and the Impact on My Well-being

By Cohen Miles-Rath, Production Manager at MHANYS

When I think of the transition from high-school to college, I think of a marker. A marker in which a young person grasps onto and begins to write the next step of their future. And this process, occurring during a stage of early adulthood, brings newly found freedom, opportunities, and responsibilities. Also, privilege. Because not everyone, especially historically disadvantaged populations, has the chance to pursue higher education. And what comes with this transition, much like other milestones in life, are particular challenges that could impact the health and wellness of a person.

I was a first generation college student. Although having privilege to some extent, being a white male, my immediate family’s limited academic history as well as our economic disadvantages challenged my pursuit of higher education. Out of five siblings, I would be the only one to attend a university straight out of high-school. Although I received financial aid, the costs associated with college were not encouraging to a young person seeking a better future. So when I made the decision to go, I already felt the pressure to succeed. Pressure many young people can relate to.

I went to college because I wanted to be a student-athlete. Nothing else mattered to me as my sport of choice (distance running) was the only place where I felt I could succeed. But in my first year, it didn’t take long to realize higher education was much more than athletics and even academics. The lifestyle change, campus culture, and independence provided me with new social experiences, different ways of learning, and a day-to-day life I had been unfamiliar with for seventeen years. And whether or not I realized at the time, all of these factors were impacting my mental health and wellness.

Although for the majority of time my mental health was thriving. All I did outside of academics was workout and socialize, making the social and physical dimensions, included in SAMHSA’s 8 Dimensions of Wellness, the most critical to my overall health. While other people had a different purpose for their time in college, mine relied on athletics and the people associated with it. And that was okay. I was doing well in my sport, getting along with many people, and succeeding enough in classes. Everything seemed right. Everything felt good. However, that would all eventually change.

In my senior year, as the stakes for my sport reached its peak, my athletic identity took its worst hit. When I failed to reach a goal I had been training years for, my purpose for being in college shattered. It felt as though I had lost the most essential element of myself. The state of my well-being projected through athletics became so unwell, I suddenly quit the sport for good—an unlikely action of mine. And with no protective factors put in place, I was...
...not aware of my unwellness—reaching out for help never crossed my mind.

When it came to my friends and family, it was difficult for them to recognize what was happening to me. I cannot recall anyone attempting to connect with me about how I felt with my running career. And the reasons for this were mostly because I looked fine on the outside. I never showed any signs of distress or difficulties. My focus had turned entirely to my social life in college—a place where I could pretend nothing was wrong. A place where everything continued to seem right and feel good. However, that was not true.

Interject the substance use aspects of social culture in college. Alcohol and partying became my way to cope—my way to self-medicate. My grades began to drop. My friends changed. Returning to distance running became impossible as my reason for going to college drastically altered. Because I had planned to stay an extra fifth year to graduate, there was plenty of time for me to indulge in this new lifestyle. But the thing is, this lifestyle did nothing to help me. In fact, the risks associated with substance misuse can greatly increase the challenge of maintaining wellness. And this became very apparent for me in the following year.

A person’s mental health and wellness not only shifts day-to-day, but can also have major changes throughout longer periods of time. My well-being had been deteriorating for more than a year until, right before graduation, everything came crashing down. For the first time I would experience severe symptoms of psychosis; an aspect of a disorder in which, based on my genetic history, I was at-risk for. The extreme unwell side of the wellness continuum can result in tragedies beyond comprehension. And that’s where the end of my undergraduate college career landed—a tragedy resulting from not addressing my unwellness and then experiencing severe mental illness. Instead of graduating and moving onto the next step of my future, my life changed forever. I was now in an uphill battle with an illness I had little understanding of.

There is a lot more to my story with mental illness that I cannot put into words here. But what I can say is that eventually, through intense treatment and hard work, I did recover from both the illness and tragedy. Although it would take me more time, I did graduate with my bachelor’s degree. And then, I continued pursuing higher education by getting a masters degree in social work. I did not stop writing the next steps of my future and found a different reason to go to college. The reason being a quest for knowledge with social issues and how I can give back to people who face challenges in their life.

So now when I think of the transition from high-school to college, I also think about everything, (good and bad) that can impact the well-being of a young person taking on the journey. Because there is so much more to college than academics. And it’s better for students to have the ability to recognize the state of their well-being and what is having an effect on them. If I could go back and redo my experience as an undergraduate student, I would certainly pay more attention to my mental health and wellness. Perhaps then, I would have been more likely to use positive coping strategies when I faced difficulties and avoided a potentially life-ending tragedy.

Here are some of my personal tips that I would have told my younger self when going to college:

- Realize your reasons for pursuing college may change and that’s okay

(CONTINUED ONTO NEXT PAGE)
The concept of orienting new college students to campus life prior to initiating their first semester has a long history in the United States. Harvard College has been noted as the first to establish a program wherein experienced students helped new students navigate the transition. In 1927, Ohio State initiated “Freshman Week” as a way to help acquaint students with campus life, engage students in fellowship with one another, and improve student retention. By 1947, orientation was a formalized university program.

Modern college orientation continues to serve as a means for incoming students to ease the transition into college. Freshman orientation is a way for students to meet other students, become familiar with campus services, and register for fall classes. Orientation can also alert students to the availability of intramural sports, political activities, how to write for the campus paper, work at the campus radio station, volunteer and even involvement in fraternities.

Experts recommend that every student attending college in the fall should add orientation to their to-do list prior to the commencement of the fall semester. Modern orientation has also progressed to recognizing the fact that parents also need help dealing with the transition to college and have added parent orientation.

One of the most important challenges that new students will face, especially during their first semester, has do with their mental wellness. And although many first-year orientation programs often include sessions on alcohol use and abuse, sexual violence, and other topics pertaining to student health and lifestyles, unfortunately, few colleges include mental health. How can this be considering what we know about the mental health of new college students? According to the Healthy Minds Study, the proportion of students with a diagnosed mental health condition rose to 35.5% in 2017, up from 21.9% since 2007. Thirty percent of students suffer from depression and rates of suicidal ideation are also up, almost doubled from 5.8% in 2007 to a frightening 11% in 2017. Worse yet – all of these rates have increased in a post-COVID world.

So what exactly would students benefit from in an orientation program that infused mental health and well-being into these programs? In its Position Statement 73, College and University Response to Mental Health Crises, Mental Health America calls for colleges to “Include programs in orientation that discuss the available mental health services, including disability support services, on campus and in the community with students and their families.”

(CONTINUED ONTO NEXT PAGE)
In New York where mental health instruction has been required by law since 2018, K through 12 students should be learning about their mental health in a way that will benefit them as they transition to college. Theoretically, students from New York will be better prepared in their understanding of things like the symptoms of mental illness and where and how to get help when needed. Still, many won’t be prepared to anticipate the risk factors associated with a major life change such as college. Being away from home and academic pressures don’t by themselves cause mental illness, but they are factors that will challenge the resiliency of even the most healthy students. And while homesickness may be regarded as a fairly typical response to the transition to college life, severe homesickness in college students is considered by many mental health clinicians to be a manifestation of adult separation anxiety disorder (ASAD). Recent research suggests that while approximately 7% of adults have ASAD, as many as 21% of college students may suffer from the disorder.

There is some hope that the tide is changing for the addition of mental health in college orientation. A bill passed in 2016 in Texas requires universities to show students a live presentation or video with information about mental health and suicide as part of their orientation. A similar law in Illinois called the Mental Health Early Action on Campus Act is a broad mix of 11 requirements and goals to infuse mental health services throughout campuses and make sure staff outside the counseling center are trained to identify and respond to a student mental health concern. If funded, the law requires campuses to boost awareness of mental health resources during freshmen orientation, on their website and during high stress points of the semester.

Other colleges are beginning to voluntarily offer new students some resources. This video by Hunter College is an example of how schools can easily and cost-effectively provide mental health and wellness information to new students.

MHANYS supports the move toward greater mental health literacy in higher education. MHANYS is considering ways to incorporate Mental health in college orientation as part of a larger legislative initiative to build mental health literacy into college life and culture.
Though statistics vary, we know that approximately 25 percent of students making the transition from high school to college will have experienced a mental health disorder. A more dismal picture is painted by a 2018 study by the World Health Organization (WHO), which surveyed almost 14,000 first-year college students (in eight countries) and found that 35 percent struggled with a mental illness, particularly depression or anxiety. This incidence has only risen since the advent of COVID. A recent survey by TimelyMD found that an overwhelming majority (85%) of college students say they continue to experience increased stress and/or anxiety as a result of the virus and the associated lockdown. So collectively, the proportion of new college students that will either have a mental health diagnosis or may be at risk due to transition stressors and COVID accounts for the majority of soon to be college freshman. Therefore, all incoming college students and their families can benefit from mental health resources for new students. MHANYS has collected a number of these resources and encourages students, parents and teachers to familiarize themselves with them.

**Resources for the new college students, families and educators:**

**Mental Health America** provides [Life on Campus](https://www.mhanys.org/mentalhealthEDnys.org) is a college mental health resource that addresses ways to manage aspects of college life that impact mental wellness and resiliency. Topics include alcohol, substance abuse and depression, balancing work and school, how to deal with homesickness in college, dealing with roommates, handling stress, and sleep hygiene guidance.

**The National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI)** offers a helpful guide of mental health considerations for the transitioning student. [Managing a Mental Health Condition in College](https://www.nami.org/ managing-a-mental-health-condition-in-college) is broken into categories including picking the right college, preparing for college and disclosing mental health conditions and requesting accommodations. [NAMI On Campus](https://www.nami.org/About-NAMI/NAMI-On-Campus) connects students with one another allowing them to share common experiences and support each other through the transitions. NAMI On Campus clubs work to end the stigma that makes it hard for students to talk about mental health and get the help they need. Clubs hold creative meetings, hold innovative awareness events, and offer signature NAMI programs through partnerships with NAMI State Organizations and Affiliates across the nation.

**The JED Foundation** runs various online resources for transitioning college students such as [ULifeline](https://www.ulifeline.org). ULifeline describes itself as an “anonymous, confidential, online resource center” where college students can find information on multiple topics concerning mental wellness. The website features an online mental health evaluation test and the ULifeline Network that lists helpful resources on campus of participating colleges and universities. [Half of Us](https://www.halfofus.org) is a national campaign aimed at increasing awareness and knowledge of mental health issues in college-aged populations by providing information on different struggles and disorders, providing tips on how to help one’s self or friend, and search engines to locate professional help nearby.

[Collegestats.org](https://www.collegestats.org) provides the [Mental Health Guide for College Students](https://www.collegestats.org/mental-health-guide-for-college-students) designed to help new students identify the signs and symptoms of common mental health issues for college students. The guide also discusses where and when to seek help.

**Mental Health Issues When College Students Are Sent Home by COVID-19.** A [video](https://www.webmd.com/health/a-1577026) by Psychiatric Times Dr John Greden discusses many issues around college mental health and the upheaval the COVID-19 pandemic is causing in this population.

**WebMD** offers a resource geared to the parents of soon-to-be college students about [Mental Health Issues Overlooked in College Transition](https://www.webmd.com/education/features/mental-health-issues-overlooked-in-college-transition). In addition to statistics about youth mental health that parents may find informative, if not a little sobering, the article includes some useful tips on talking to youth about mental health prior to their departure for college.
Leaving the familiarity of high school and stepping into the unknowns of young adulthood can be a challenging transition for many teenagers. Emotional preparedness is one facet of this adjustment that is not always given sufficient attention in our schools and communities at-large.

Having gone through this transition process less than five years ago, I can testify to how beneficial it would have been to be equipped with stronger guidance around self-management, resilience, relationship-building, basic mental health literacy, and other important life and independent living skills. These are areas that have a far-reaching impact on life outside of the schoolhouse gate, and should be taken just as seriously in preparation for young adulthood.

In the same way that high school prepared me academically for the rigors of college, my hope is that social and emotional readiness can be made a priority by students, families, communities, and school systems across the country, including New York State. Being emotionally prepared is equally as important for teenagers who choose pathways such as entering the military, taking a gap year, or entering the workforce directly. Regardless of the direction that a teenager chooses, it is important they are supported fully in this transition process.

This is why I was so passionate about contributing to the promotion of the Set to Go program when I first joined The Jed Foundation (JED), the leading national non-profit dedicated to protecting emotional health and preventing suicide for our nation’s teens and young adults.

Set to Go is a JED program built to help teens prepare emotionally for the transition out of high school. It offers a comprehensive online resource based on five key areas of knowledge and skill development that comprise emotional preparedness: college in perspective, basic life skills, social and emotional skills, mental health and substance abuse literacy, and the transition to college life.

Each of these domains contain a wealth of recommendations, strategies, and resources that serve as important guideposts for how a high school graduate can best navigate the emerging adult world. For example, I found the suggestions related to staying connected to family members, coping with adversity, and dealing with academic/social competition to be particularly helpful and something that will definitely resonate with many teenagers and their support networks.

Set to Go also includes resources to help high school students properly assess whether attending college may be the best option for them, and if so, the importance of considering whether their desired college properly supports students of color or those who identify as LGBTQ+.

Many of these sections contain easily navigable “cards”, breaking down written information in a digestible format. For example, the Techniques For Managing Difficult Emotions walks readers through the process of a) identifying the feeling b) acceptance c) expressing the feeling and d) using a healthy strategy to take care of yourself.

In addition to these informational guides, Set to Go also features a variety of interactive tools that can be utilized by students, families, and educators during the transition process. For those like myself who were considering college after high school, the Right Fit Quiz can be completed to help students evaluate not only whether a particular school is the right academic “fit”, but also an appropriate match from a social and emotional...
Transitioning from high school and going on to college or other opportunities can be a challenge because it involves change – and all change asks us to leave our comfort zone and take steps into the unknown. But resistance to change leaves us stagnant and void of all the new learning opportunities that usually accompany change. Throughout life we deal with change in many different forms, and life changes can be both positive and negative. The stress that accompanies change is a natural part of life, but the pandemic brought rapid change to our lives and left uncertainty, loss and hardship for many students graduating from high school this year. Change is never easy, but this year students and their families will benefit from resources that support a healthy successful transition aimed at opportunities for growth.

Transitioning from high school to college or other opportunities should include support – healthy support. The most universal truth the pandemic brought to us is – how interdependent we are on one another. The Mental Health Association in New York State, Inc. (MHANYS) developed CarePath™ a transition support tool designed to assist students that feel challenged and concerned about their mental health.

So, what is a CarePath™? CarePath™ is a blueprint for achieving and maintaining better overall health and a sense of well-being. MHANYS CarePath™ program was designed to assist individuals/ students and their identified supporters – be it family members or friends - after a recent setback or transitioning from a treatment setting. A CarePath™ Coach supports a student’s reconnections amongst family, friends and within the community, be it– school, job or other associations. However, CarePath™ is appropriate for anyone interested in achieving mental, physical and spiritual health.

So, what makes CarePath™ unique? CarePath™ addresses the health of a student and their identified supporters and they participate together in the CarePath™ program – each defining their own health and well-being. CarePath™ is a relational approach for achieving and maintaining wellness and protects the integrity of health within relationships – be it family members, spouses or friends. Students and their family members develop realistic expectations about the process involved in achieving wellness and learn how to define health and wellness in their lives together. Each participant creates their own CarePath™ and the shared experience allows family members and supporters to better support their loved one. Each participant recognizes how their choices direct health outcomes. The student in need - who is no longer the only focus - can also offer support and encouragement to their family members or other supporters.

To be resilient and enjoy a sense of well-being involves support – and so often family members and friends show up to offer support with the best intentions, but they are experiencing their own stress. When a loved one is not well it impacts the whole family including the children. CarePath™ offers a unique opportunity for the student and their supporters to define their individual health and well-being and learn about the unique expressions of intergenerational health and wellness. (CONTINUED ONTO NEXT PAGE)
MHANYS CarePath™ engages the cultural identity of each participant. Our cultural identity impacts our perceptions about mental and physical health - our race, ethnicity, age, sex, gender and placement within a family impact how we define health and wellness. In participating in the CarePath program students and their family members or friends develop a “wellness mindset”. A wellness mindset is similar to a “growth mindset” because both involve becoming intentional and incorporating practices to build resiliency. A wellness mindset is a perspective that allows you to experience yourself as “well” regardless of a diagnosis. We all know individuals that manage chronic physical and mental health conditions or manage substance use disorders and live with a sense of well-being. CarePath™ incorporates a trauma-informed holistic approach in defining health and wellness.

So, what is the role of a CarePath™ Coach? A CarePath™ Coach supports participants in person-centered planning as each person defines their own health and wellness with realistic expectations that their wellness similar to illness exists on a continuum. CarePath™ participants learn together about the interconnectedness of all the dimensions of their health, and how to expand the definition of support in their lives. Each participant selects wellness tools designed to manage and enhance their mind-body health, and they are exposed to options that support healthy lifestyle choices - but most importantly they are building their resilience together.

The Mental Health Association in New York State, Inc. is now offering online certification to become a CarePath Coach and will resume in-person training once our citizens’ health is no longer at risk. MHANYS online certification in the CarePath™ model includes instruction in trauma-informed guidelines for online engagement and creating a safe emotional space for CarePath™ participants.

Please check out MHANYS website at https://mhanys.org/products/carepath/ and you’ll find detailed information about MHANYS CarePath program.

### Upcoming Trainings

**Upcoming CarePath™ Coach Certification Training:**

Online CarePath™ Coach training is now available. Certification training includes 15 hours throughout five days and online instruction is from 9am- 12pm throughout the week. Training dates include: July 12th thru 16th - August 2nd thru 6th and September 20th thru 24th

MHANYS online certification in the CarePath™ model includes instruction in trauma-informed guidelines for virtual engagement. Learn more about CarePath™ at https://mhanys.org/products/carepath/

**Building Safety with Diverse SOGIE Youth and their Caregivers**

June 9 from 9:00 to 11:00 am

June 10 from 6:30 to 8:30 pm

Building Safety with Diverse SOGIE Youth and their Caregivers is an introduction to the Family Acceptance Project’s research that highlights family preservation. This 2-hour workshop Facilitated by staff from Ruth Ellis Center in Highland Park, MI includes an overview of sexual orientation, gender identity, and expression, or SOGIE, providing a framework for these social identities along with best practices to enhance interpersonal, family and professional relationships with folks who identify as LGBTQ+ or have diverse/expansive S.O.G.I.E.

In partnership with New York State Education Department, NYS Office of Mental Health, Suicide Prevention Center of NY, and NYS Office of Children and Family Services.
Did You Know?
Mental Health of Transitioning Youth:
High School and Beyond

- There is nearly a twofold increase in mood disorders from the 13-to-14-year-old age group to the 17-to-18-year-old age group—roughly the age of a high school senior.
- Nationally, only 40% of students with emotional, behavioral and mental health disorders graduate from high school, compared to the national average of 76%.
- Only 32% of students with a serious mental illness continue onto postsecondary education.
- Moderate to severe anxiety in first-year college students increased 40%, from 18.1% before the pandemic to 25.3% within four months after the pandemic began.
- A recent study found that nearly one in six high school seniors are considering taking a gap year because of COVID.
- More than 80% of college students felt overwhelmed by all they had to do in the past year and 45% have felt things were hopeless.
- Almost 73% of students living with a mental health condition experienced a mental health crisis on campus. Yet, 34.2% reported that their college did not know about their crisis.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RESOURCES</th>
<th>RESOURCES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alberti Center for Bullying Abuse Prevention</td>
<td>NYS School Social Work Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ed.buffalo.edu/alberti.html</td>
<td>nyssswa.org</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disability Rights New York</td>
<td>Parent to Parent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>drnry.org</td>
<td>parenttoparentnys.org</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JED Foundation</td>
<td>The National Child Traumatic Stress Network</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jedfoundation.org</td>
<td>nctsn.org</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NAMI</td>
<td>The Trevor Project (LGBTQ Suicide Prevention)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nami.org</td>
<td>thetrevorproject.org</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Institute of Mental Health</td>
<td>Understood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nimh.nih.gov</td>
<td>understood.org</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NY State Coalition for Children's Behavioral Health</td>
<td>Youth Communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cbhny.org</td>
<td>youthcomm.org</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NYS Health Foundation</td>
<td>Youth Decide NY (Problem Gambling Prevention)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nyshealthfoundation.org/resources/</td>
<td>youthdecideny.org</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NYS PTA</td>
<td>Youth Mental Health Project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nyspta.org</td>
<td>ymhpjject.org</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NYS School Counselors Association</td>
<td>Youth.gov</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nyssca.org</td>
<td>youth.gov/youth-topics/youth-mental-health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NYS School Psychologist Association</td>
<td>YOUTHPOWER!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nyasp.org</td>
<td>youthpowerny.org</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**WE ARE HERE TO HELP**

MHANYS School Mental Health Resource and Training Center is available to provide information and resources to schools and families, including:

- mental health instruction and training
- guidance on community resources
- technical assistance

Contact us directly at schools@mhanys.org or 1-800-766-6177 / 518-434-0439

[mentalhealthEDnys.org](http://mentalhealthEDnys.org)

CRISIS TEXT LINE

TEXT “Got5” TO 741741 TO START A CONVERSATION

Free, 24/7, Confidential Crisis Support