INTRODUCTION

Health and Wellness can be a risk area for college students especially for members of Greek letter organizations as they are often some of the busiest and involved leaders. Their involvement comes with pressure, stress, constant movement, and a notion of continuously being looked at in society. This section will help guide members to best practices in addressing health and wellness topics such as stress, mental illness concerns including depression and self-harm, eating disorders and nutrition, and physical and sexual health. These topics within Health and Wellness are ones that aren’t as noticeable to the eye but can effect members/chapters much deeper than on the surface. It’s important to incorporate these best practices into your chapters as it will all around help members become better individuals first which will help your chapter as a whole. Your brotherhood/sisterhood can only strengthen when your members are in a positive place as individuals to do so.

Key Terms:

Mental Illness- is “health conditions that are characterized by alterations in thinking, mood, or behavior associated with distress and/or impaired functioning.” (CDCMH, 2013)

Depression- is a mental illness disorder “characterized by depressed or sad mood, diminished interest in activities which used to be pleasurable, weight gain or loss, psychomotor agitation or hindrance, fatigue, inappropriate guilt, difficulties concentrating as well as recurrent thoughts of death. It is more than having a ‘bad day.’” (CDCDP, 2013)

Self-Harm- is a term that “can take many different forms. In general self harm is the act of deliberately causing harm to oneself either by causing physical injury, by putting oneself in dangerous situations and/or self neglect.” (National Self Harm Network)

Suicide Ideation- is “thinking about, considering, or planning for suicide.” (CDCDF, 2013)

POLICIES & VIOLATIONS

The Ball State Risk Management Policy outlines one of its purposes is to “enhance the safety of our members and guests.” Practicing positive personal health and wellness will help inevitably reduce the risk of unsafe environments and situations for members, guests, chapters and the Greek community. If one does not practice positive health and wellness then a variety of risk management issues could occur or be an effect of negative health and wellness such as life or death crisis situations, unstable mental and emotional situations, unsafe alcohol and drug use, sexual assaults, hazing and/or tolerance of, the spread of disease or illness, etc.
When it comes to mental illness several forms of self harm can occur. The Ball State Student Rights and Community Standards’ Student Code has outlined a self-harm protocol as it relates to mental illness which details about self-harm prevention, incident response and emergency notification. The protocol is present to help protect the student and provide them help as quickly and as safely as possible. (BSUAI, 2015)

Additionally, the Ball State Student Rights and Community Standards’ Student Code has outlined the Tobacco Free Campus Policy. The university “is committed to providing a healthy working and learning environment for the entire campus community.” By not engaging in tobacco related activities (smoking, chewing, using, etc.) you can have a healthier life which will put yourself and your chapter at fewer risks for risk management issues such as fires or emotional distress causing erratic behavior. (BSUAL, 2015) In addition, if found violating the Tobacco Free Campus policy, a $100 fine could result to the individual(s) using tobacco as well as the individual and/or the organization could lose privileges on campus (such as space use, etc.).

Lastly, the Ball State Student Rights and Community Standards’ Student Code has outlined the policy for leave of absences. Appendix M- Student Leaves for Funerals, Bereavement, and Jury Duty helps protect the right for students to have grieving time in the case of a death in the student’s family or household. (BSUAM, 2015) This policy is important for students to be aware of in the case of a death which could occur that they can be allowed time to grieve with an excused absence time from classes. In order to maintain positive health and wellness, students should the time to grieve for the loss to keep in a positive mental and emotional health.

CAUTIONARY MEASURES/ FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

When it comes to college students, they are pulled in many different directions being as they are usually prominent leaders on campus or within their organization which is why personal health and wellness are exceedingly important. Here are some frequently asked questions and cautionary measures you should consider...

- **What do I need to keep an eye out for?** Is a member usually be a happy person with a positive outlook on life but recently they haven’t been? Is someone usually always on time, proactive, and engaged but recently they are always sleeping or desire to be alone, either late or don’t show up to things, or doesn’t care anymore? Are they suddenly counting what they eat to an extreme or working out 3 or more times a day? That is something to take notice of and act upon. Sudden changed behavior is something to be aware of as warning signs to being unwell such as depression or eating disorders. Seek the help of experts when you notice these things.

- **What if someone asks me to “not tell anyone” regarding self harm or suicide ideation.** If someone shares with you a personal situation where there is emotional or physical harm involved but they ask you not to tell anyone, what do you do? Do you care about the person? Do you want to see them better or well? If so, you should tell someone. You
would rather be safe than sorry if something negative or harmful were to happen so it is okay to tell a health professional or safety personnel. Make it clear to the individual that you are telling someone because you genuinely care about them and their wellbeing first and foremost. It’s okay for someone to be upset because overall their safety is most important and they will eventually appreciate you for helping. They more than likely told you in the first place as a subconscious sign to reach out for help.

- **I’m being a good friend by helping them. Why would I need to get others involved?** You’re not an expert in dealing with mental, emotional or physical illness so let the professionals help. Don’t try to handle a situation on your own when it may be too much for you to fully handle or accurately help with. Go to a doctor, the hospital, a counselor, the police, etc. for the advice and help. Plus it can add unmanageable stress and pressure onto you that you don’t need.

- **What does it matter how I react to stress?** When you get stressed, how does your body respond? Listen to how your body reacts (emotionally and physically); do you need to take deep breathes, take a 20 minute nap, or do you need to do an activity to release stress? The more you pay attention to your body when you’re stressed the easier and healthier it will be to deal with it. Plus you won’t be as stressed when you know how to deal with it.

- **Its college; you’re not supposed to sleep that much. Right?** College students should get between 7-9 hours of sleep a day in order to maintain energy and wellness while dealing with the rigor of college. Regular sleep will help you retain materials for class, provide you more energy in the day, and helps prevent getting sick so excuses won’t help at all. If you are having difficulty finding enough time to get sleep consider how you are managing your time.

- **I am fairly healthy as it is. Why should I practice every aspect of health and wellness matter?** Having a healthy lifestyle means trying to achieve eating a healthy balance of foods, get regular exercise, avoid excessive alcohol consumption, avoid tobacco use, find things that make you happy, go to the doctor when you are feeling ill, take protective measures if engaging in sexual activity, etc. Not practicing a certain component of having a healthy lifestyle can hinder you in many more ways than it can help you. For example you may regularly eat fruits and vegetables and work out however you may smoke which still hinders your overall health and wellness. Your goal should be to be a well-rounded healthy individual.

- **Where can I go to confidentially talk about a situation or get help?** The Counseling Center is legally bound to keeping the information you share confidential. There are a few exceptions to this such as if it is deemed necessary to protect you or someone from imminent physical or psychological danger. Check out the Ball State Counseling Center website for more information. There are other places/people who you can reach out to for help however they are not legally bound to confidentiality such as Resident Assistants, Hall Directors, the Health Center, the Health, Alcohol, and Drug Education office,
University Police Department, etc. However know that any information shared to those resources would not be misused and only shared to appropriate sources if needed for your situation.

- **Will I or the chapter get in trouble?** This does depend on the situation and what lead to it. The Office of Student Life & the Greek Life’s topic priority is the safety and wellbeing of students so you more than likely not be penalized for helping another individual seek help

**BEST PRACTICES**

**Best Practice #1:** Provide students with a listing of campus and local community resources.

The listing of resources should always be accessible to members so providing it on your chapter website or your organization’s internal management system is recommended. This should be a resource that any member can go to for information and identifies who to go to for help. Find a fun, non-intimidating way to present the information to the chapter; for example play a jeopardy game of campus resources or do an all chapter photo challenge. You can also invite campus and community allies into a chapter to present. (BSU, 2015)

**Best Practice #2:** Make health and wellness conversations a regular part of your chapter culture.

Consider how your chapter can have continual conversations about being healthy and well. An example could be having a health and wellness tip of the week which highlights ways to live a healthy lifestyle, have a ‘what would you do’ debate, or participating in self-assessments regarding these topics. Health and wellness related conversations can be tough and uncomfortable to have so consider showing members how to go about talking about sensitive topics within health and wellness. Further connecting health and wellness to your values will be even more impactful in the discussion and how having negative health and wellness can not only effect members individually but also as a whole chapter and Greek community. It’s most helpful to have a culture where members can freely inquire and seek out help when necessary rather than hide from it.

**Best Practice #3:** Highlight opportunities for members to gain leadership experience and get involved within health and wellness areas.

Campus and the local community offers many ways for members to be involved outside of just with your chapter. Consider showcasing other experiences connected to health and wellness such as being a Peer Victim Advocates, Peer Health Educators, campus fitness instructor, CPR or lifeguarding certification, and more.

**Best Practice #4:** Participate in or create programs that highlight positive health and wellness.
Campus offers many events that already exist with positive health and wellness activities. Explore ones such as Spring Break safety week, alcohol awareness week, healthy foods fair, outdoor pursuit trips, alternative breaks service trips, rock climbing wall, Journey to Hope suicide awareness event, and more.

**RESOURCES/REFERENCES**


