

THE COLLEGE YEARS:

How Students with Lived Experience Navigate Academics & Mental Health Management

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The Transitions to Adulthood Center for Research

Acknowledgements

The Learning & Working Center at Transitions RTC is a national effort that aims to improve the supports for youth and young adults, ages 14-30, with serious mental health conditions to successfully complete their schooling and training and move into rewarding work lives. We are located at the University of Massachusetts Medical School, Worcester, MA, Department of Psychiatry, Systems & Psychosocial Advances Research Center.

Visit us at:

<http://www.umassmed.edu/TransitionsACR>

The contents of this presentation were developed under a grant with funding from the National Institute on Disability, Independent Living, and Rehabilitation Research, and from the Center for Mental Health Services of the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, United States Department of Health and Human Services (ACL GRANT # 90RT5031, The Learning and Working Transitions RRTC). NIDILRR is a Center within the Administration for Community Living (ACL), Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). Additional funding provided by UMass Medical School's Commonwealth Medicine division. The contents of this presentation do not necessarily represent the policy of NIDILRR, ACL, HHS, SAMHSA, and you should not assume endorsement by the Federal Government.



PASS OVERVIEW



The Transitions to Adulthood Center for Research

Mental Health in Higher Education

- Roughly 1/3 of undergraduates have clinically significant symptoms of mental health problems such as depression and anxiety.¹
- Students with mental health conditions who attend college experience high dropout rates - one of the highest of any disability group.²
- Positive mental health is strongly correlated to academic success, retention, and ultimately vocational success, adult resiliency & Return on Investment.³



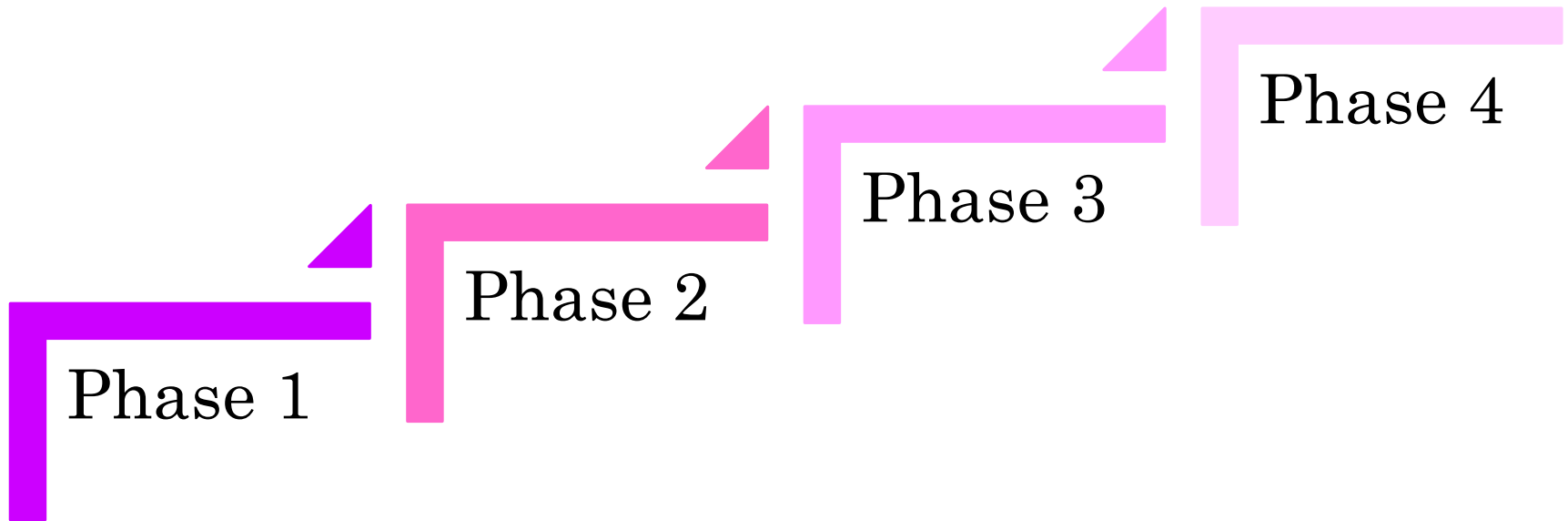
Peer Academic Support for Success (PASS)

The PASS Program:

an empirically supported peer coach intervention to help students with MHC succeed academically



PASS Phases



QUALITATIVE INTERVIEWS

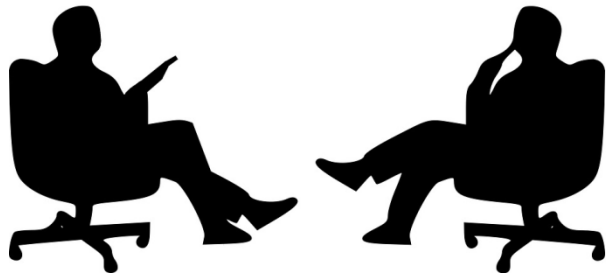
College students with MHC, faculty, Disability Services staff,
Counseling Center staff



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Qualitative Interviews

1-hour interviews covered experiences working with or being YA students with MHC, and unique challenges and facilitators to academic success



Participating Sites:

- Boston University
- UMass Boston
- Wright State University

Interview Participants:

- College Students (N=24)
- Faculty (N=21)
- Counseling Center Staff (N=8)
- Disability Center Staff (N=9)



Participant Demographics

College Students

- Primarily female (83%), white (54%), upperclassman (54%)
- 50% transferred
- 75% currently in outpatient therapy

Disability Services Staff

- Primarily female (89%), white (78%)
- 67% in current position ≤ 2 years

Faculty

- Primarily female (67%), white (95%)
- Experience in academia:
 - 10-20 years (43%)
 - 20+ years (57%)

Counseling Staff

- Primarily white (87.5%), female (87.5%)
- 75% were in their current position ≤ 5 years



Qualitative Coding

- Developed preliminary themes
- Identified concrete codes
- Developed coding manual

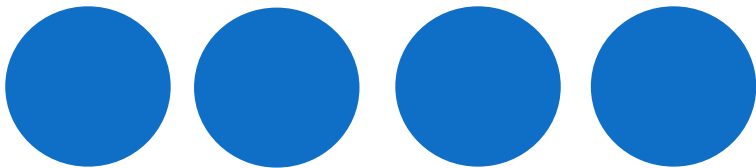
- 3 staff coding with Dedoose
 - Primary and secondary coders
 - Interrater Reliability at 80% or higher



Every student is unique, but there are some commonly faced challenges.

- Anxiety
- Stress coping skills
- Time management
- Chronic absenteeism

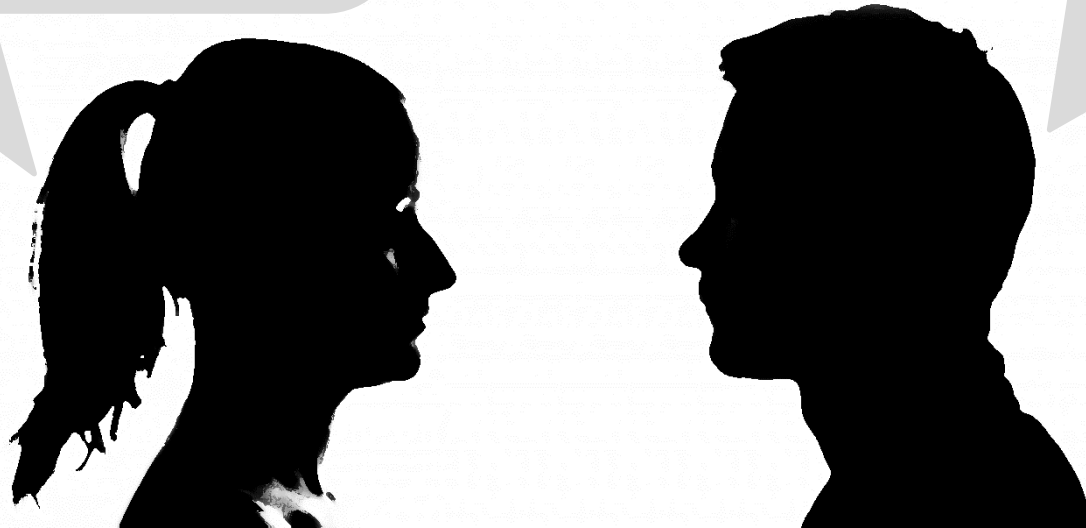
“...my art class recently they went to the art museum and I just like was not into it...like I just get anxiety just getting lost, I’ve never been there...I don’t have any friends to meet up with in that class. I didn’t even go. I was like, ‘I cannot do this.’” - *Student*



There are differing perspectives amongst faculty on how to best support students.

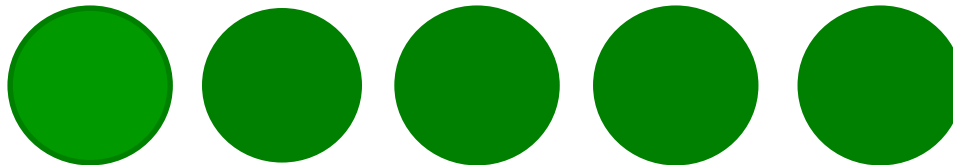
“Unless it’s documented, I’m all about equity. If you get one more day, everybody gets one more day, ...I’m willing to extend their deadline but it doesn’t come free; there’s a penalty at some point.”

“Like I said, I’ve not had students who were trying to get out of work, they’re just not... they just need help getting it done, you know? And, you know it’s usually crunch time, you know, and usually they’ve got three exams plus two papers or four papers, so I can just give them a little extra time.”



Confidentiality laws block communication between faculty and on campus services.

“...I know there that there is a lot of confidentiality issues, but just to know that the student is showing up on an ongoing basis...I don't know if that's even allowed to be divulged, but just to know that so-and-so has contacted us...” - *Faculty*



Students are hesitant to access services and accommodations.

“...I think it can be difficult. And I think for a student that is already having mental health issues. Or you know is reticent around disclosing because of concerns around stigma or whatever....I think the university probably could find a way to be more welcoming. To be less bureaucratic.” – *Faculty*

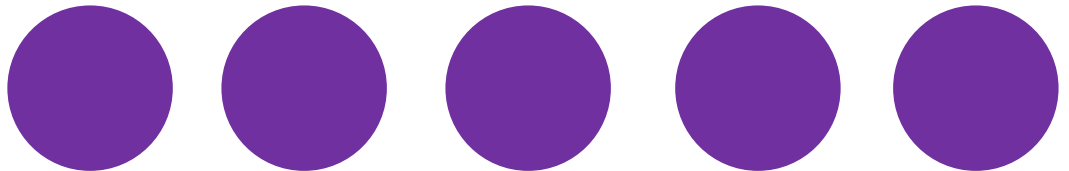
- Discrimination (stigma)
- Bureaucracy/required paperwork
- Preference for informal accommodations over formal accommodations



For students who use services, they quickly learned they are very under-resourced.



“I mean first of all, if the initial appointment you make with someone is like ‘I’m sorry but like after this...I really don’t think I can see you after, you know, two months like that would be helpful if they could just...be there for a prolonged period of time” - *Student*



Staff voiced similar concerns with resource shortages as a barrier to serving students

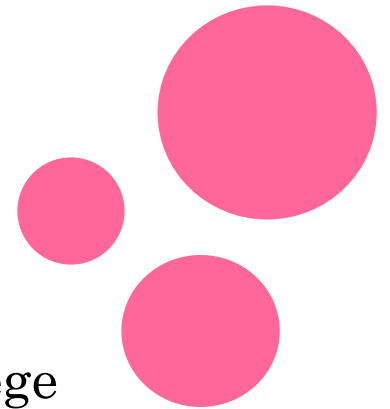
We haven't [promoted services] because if we did you know...I already have a waiting list of 17-20 people so it's just...it would be too much to promote it"- ODS Staff

Every year we have a wait list that starts in October and runs through the end of the semester, so- winter semester- that's the biggest issues. If you can't get the help you need, I think that then undermines people's ability to be able to have the energy to focus on academic work."- Counseling Staff



Main Take-A-Way's

- College students with MHC:
 - Struggle to navigate the academic demands of college
 - Aren't often accessing on campus services (e.g., ODS)
 - On campus services lack the resources to meet these students' needs.
- Faculty & Staff:
 - Have mixed beliefs on appropriate levels of support for students with MHC
 - Face barriers when communicating with on campus supports (i.e., confidentiality)
 - Many resource shortages impact faculty/staff ability to support students effectively



THE PASS MODEL



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Inspiration for PASS Model

- Phase 1 qualitative interviews
- **Two** pre-existing college coaching models:
 1. Wright State University's Raiders on the Autism Spectrum Excelling (RASE) program for students on the Autism Spectrum
 2. Boston University's college coaching model for students with mental health conditions

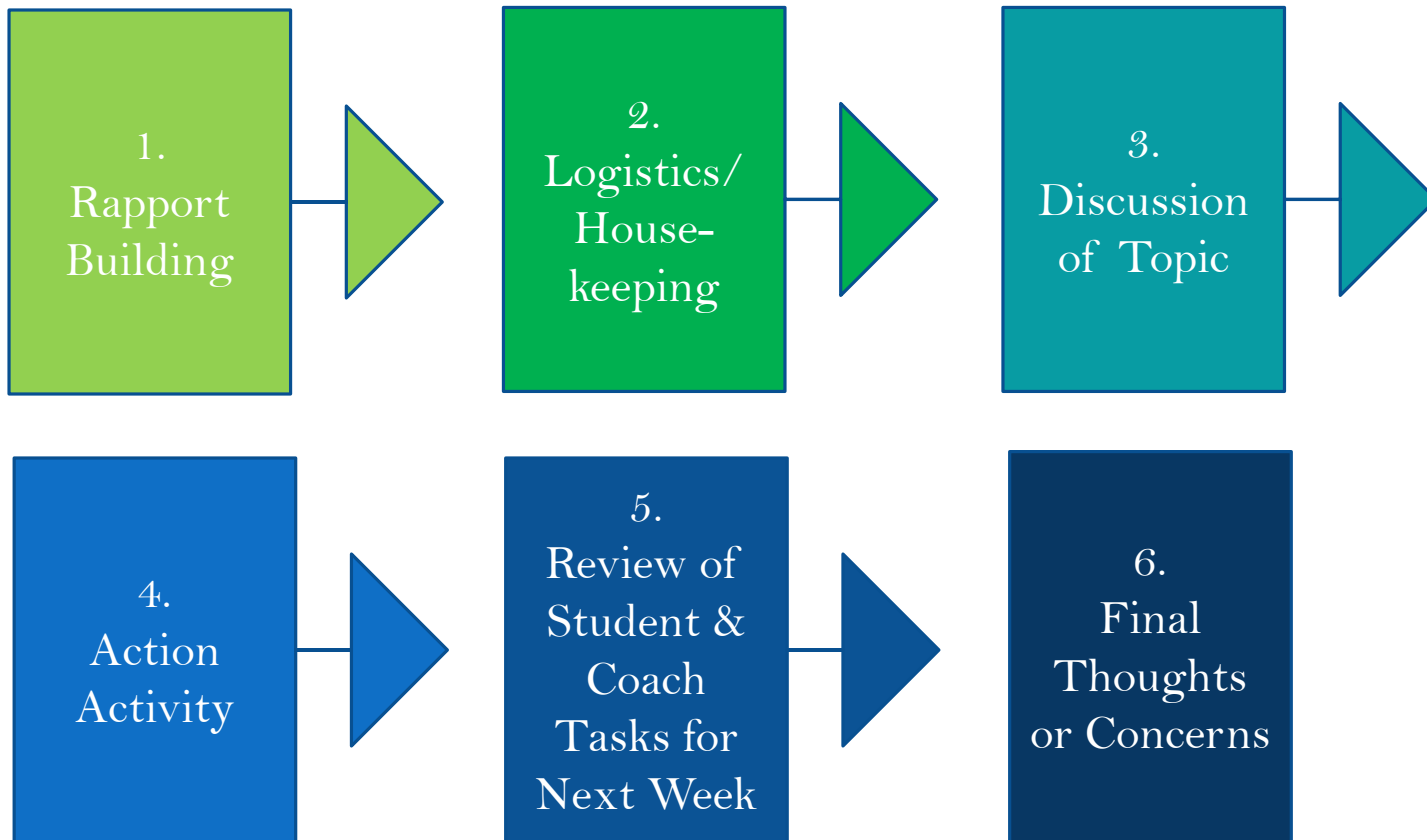


Peer Coaching Structure

- Coaches
 - Upperclassmen at Boston University
 - Academically successful and thriving on-campus
- Students
 - Undergraduates at Boston University
 - Mental health conditions
 - Academic impairments
- Coaching Structure
 - 1x/week in person coaching session
 - Up to 4 hours of coaching/week



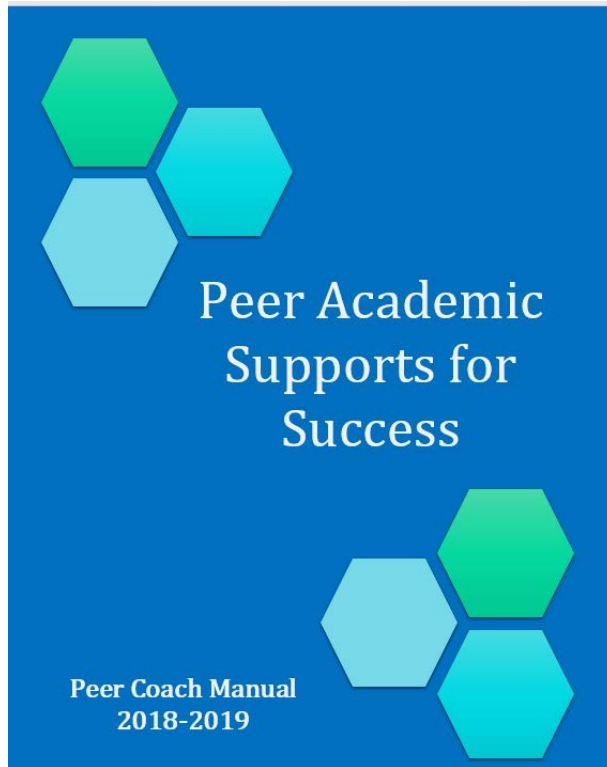
Student-Peer Coach Meeting Agenda



PASS Core Competencies



PASS Peer Coach Manual



Topics include:

- Peer support approach
- Supported education
- Responding with empathy
- Motivational Interviewing
- Crisis response and suicide prevention
- Reasonable Accommodations
- Peer coach self-care



Tools & Tip Sheets

Coaching Tool - Coaching Students to Build Structure

The capacity to structure one's time and work as a college student is a critical skill area. The demand on students to organize their time and work assignments, as well as manage time to assure assignments are done on-time is much greater than when in high school.

Assess with your student their skills strengths and skills needs in building, implementing, and managing a personal structure for academic success. Identify the skills or supports needed. These can then be worked on in coaching sessions.

Examples could include:

- ☐ Planning study and homework time each day
- ☐ Planning wellness routines, personal time, and social breaks
- ☐ Scheduling sleep routines
- ☐ Scheduling travel time to classes to ensure on-time arrival
- ☐ Breaking down longer assignments into smaller tasks over several weeks
- ☐ Creating a visual calendar of assignments for week and semester
- ☐ Using technology to set visual and auditory reminders

Together examine any resource or support students may need to be successful related to building a healthy structure. Your student may want assistance with:

- ☐ Using campus tutoring services
- ☐ Finding a quiet study space on campus
- ☐ Choosing a planner that they like and will use
- ☐ Setting visual reminders and placing them in useful locations

Coaching Tool- Building Advocacy Skills

Self-advocacy is the ability to understand and effectively communicate one's needs to other individuals. Advocacy is a critical skill in college in part because it is each student's responsibility to seek out, document, and request their reasonable accommodations.

Strategies to build self-advocacy skills:

Ask student about...

- ☐ Their learning styles and whether they need any reasonable accommodations
- ☐ If they have implemented accommodations with professors and if they need help with this task
- ☐ Their values, interests and strengths with you to build their self-identity
- ☐ Their academic and personal goals for each semester

Work with the student your knowledge of/ from...

Ability, health, and academic resources on campus work together.

Reasonable accommodations for students with medical conditions and encourage them to access disability services and resources to ease anxiety, make information accessible, and increase their self-advocacy experiences.

Identify, if they would like, to...
 Assist, or deliver accommodations personally, or help with resources to ease anxiety, make information accessible, and increase their self-advocacy experiences.

Ask for supports and resources when needed.

Develop the skill of "informing professors" with student's needs.

Coaching Tool - Reasonable Accommodations

Students who have mental health conditions may need support to do their best in school and work. The "American with Disabilities Act" (ADA) enables students with disabilities, like mental health conditions, to get academic help through academic accommodations and other legal rights.

Starting a dialogue about reasonable accommodations

- ✓ Discuss whether your student knows about accommodations
 - ☐ If yes, ask if they have discussed accommodations with their professors or the Office of Disability Services
 - ☐ If no, assist student to gain knowledge of reasonable accommodations
- ✓ If the student would like, connect them with the Office of Disability Services and/or their professors to discuss accommodations

Here is a list of reasonable accommodations to review with your student

In the Classroom	Enrollment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☐ Voice recorded lectures ☐ Classmate scribe-taker ☐ Text & syllabus given in advance ☐ Class materials available on computer ☐ Frequent feedback on classwork ☐ Alternate formats for assignments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☐ Reduced course load ☐ First choice for signing up for classes to avoid waitlist ☐ Accommodations given instead of failure if course occurs ☐ Help with financial aid/registration forms
Completing Assignments	During Exams
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☐ Extended time to complete assignments without late penalties ☐ Advance notice of assignments ☐ Assistive technology ☐ Work in pairs on assignments ☐ Help with assignments during hospitalization 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☐ Exams in alternate formats (written, oral, or electronic) ☐ Extended time for test taking ☐ Exams given one-on-one ☐ Breaks given throughout test taking ☐ Testing in room with limited distractions ☐ Allow exam to be taken in 2-3 sessions throughout the span of a few days



Coaching Principles & Ethics

Principles	Ethics
Wellness-oriented	Promote ethical behavior
Person-centered	Practice responsibilities
Relationship-focused	Confidentiality
Strengths-based	Individualization
Voluntary	Supervision



Peer Coach Training & Supervision

Peer Coach Supervisor with extensive college mental health coaching experience provides training and ongoing supervision

Training
Webinars
In-person trainings
Total of 12 hours

Group Supervision
Weekly (1 hour)
Practice peer coaching skills
Mutual support
Learning opportunities



ASSESSING IMPACT & FIDELITY



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PASS Short & Long-Term Outcomes

- Short-term outcomes - STEAR Competencies
- Long-term outcomes
 - ✓ Improved GPA
 - ✓ Increased graduation rates
 - ✓ Increased retention rates
 - ✓ Increasing general self-efficacy
 - ✓ Increased self-determination
 - ✓ Decreased internalized stigma
 - ✓ Improved relationships with faculty over time



Assessing Impact And Fidelity

Impact

- Web surveys (3/year)
 - E.g., resiliency, self-efficacy
- Academic records
 - GPA
 - Retention

Fidelity

- Peer coaching weekly logs
- Supervision logs
- Student/Coach focus groups
- Peer coach-self evaluation
- Student evaluation of peer coaching



Current Activities

- Currently recruiting 50 students at Boston University for pilot RCT
 - 25 experimental group – receiving PASS peer coaching
 - 25 control group – receiving “enhanced services as usual” via a campus resource packet



Transitions ACR Tip Sheets

- [Tools for School:
Accommodations for College
Students with Mental Health
Challenges](#)
- [Outside-the-Box
Accommodations: Real Support
for Real Students](#)
- [My Mental Health Rights on
Campus](#)



Interested in PASS?! Contact us!

Attention College Students:

Are you interested in participating in a research study on building academic success for students living with mental health conditions?

Study Description

Purpose: to better understand how to promote academic support for college students with mental health conditions

Services: you would be randomly assigned to receive peer academic coaching on a weekly basis OR a single session to help you connect with on-campus academic services. You would have an equal chance of being in either group.

Research activities: you would complete three 1-hour one-on-one interviews, and participate in a 1.5-hour focus group to provide feedback on your experiences

Timeline for involvement: 2018-2019 academic year

Compensation: \$100 if all interviews are completed

This research study is open to all students who are...

- Undergrads at Boston University
- Between ages 18-25
- Living with a mental health condition
- Interested in receiving academic support



Interested in learning more?

Please contact (call or text)
Maya Ingram

Call or text: 617-429-9338
Email: mri8@bu.edu

UMMS IRB Docket #: H00016020

 Center for Psychiatric Rehabilitation



Approved UMass Medical School IRB

Maya Ingram

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• 617-429-9338 (call/text)

Thank You!

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