# **The Campus Mental Health Crisis: Convening Stakeholders to Drive Research and Change**Convening Summary

**Executive Summary**

The Campus Mental Health Convening: Psychiatric Disability, Equity, Inclusion & Support on Campus was held virtually on October 4, 2023, and brought together students, advocates, policy leaders, researchers, and other stakeholders to identify student-driven research priorities to increase college accessibility for students with mental health disabilities. Co-led by Mental Health America, the Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law, and the University of Pittsburgh, the convening was shaped and framed following five meetings with 18 current and recent college students, where participants discussed their priorities and reacted to existing research. At the convening, the project team brought together 39 experts from across the country to identify research priorities and gaps across accommodations, crisis response, and reintegration post-crisis on college campuses with a particular focus on more stigmatized experiences, including psychosis, self-harm, and suicidality. While the group was able to make some recommendations for comparing the currently available research, it was largely agreed upon that there is insufficient research overall and that existing research is misaligned with student priorities.

**Background**

*Organizations:* Mental Health America, The Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law, and the University of Pittsburgh

In the months leading up to the convening, we hosted five workgroup meetings with a diverse group of current and recent college students with various mental health experiences in higher education, including accommodations, crisis intervention, and reintegration post-crisis or leave of absence. These students helped shape our framing and discussion points during the convening.

Student names: AmandaGrace Krier, Ashley-Laren Smalls, Christian Aleman, Connor Griffin, Daniel (Cyn) Gomez, Eden Daniel. Em Wasserman, Erica Herrera, Guiying (Angel) Zhong, Kaela Farrise, Karissa Smith, Mads Jericho, Margin Zhen, Rei Scott, Shannon Pagdon, Stefanie Lyn Kaufman-Mthimkhulu, and Tesia Shi.

*Name of Convening:* Campus Mental Health Convening: Psychiatric Disability, Equity, Inclusion & Support on Campus

*Convening Date and Location:* October 4, 2023/Virtual

*Convening Theme and Objectives:* With so much public attention on college mental health, the convening was designed to bring together researchers, campus leaders, policy experts, advocates, and students to identify student priorities for making campuses accessible for students with mental health disabilities. The event emphasized more stigmatized experiences, like psychosis, self-harm, and suicidality, and focused on addressing accommodations, crisis response, and reintegration post-crisis or following a leave of absence. Our goal was to a dialogue where all leaders in this space could collaborate to identify student preferences around currently available research as well as what is missing and most important to students. Additionally, we aimed to build connections among researchers, students, and other stakeholders to create ongoing collaboration opportunities and capacity building for students in this under-researched space.

**Convening Summary**

The convening planning team included five project team members with identities including patients, stakeholders, and researchers. Additionally, the convening was framed with the input of the 18 current and recent college students who participated in our workgroups, and the project team solicited and included invitations to leaders identified by workgroup members. The convening had 39 attendees and included workgroup members, researchers, college mental health professionals, advocates, and policy leaders. Because our framing was student-driven, we ensured that the largest group was researchers with expertise in campus mental health. This was especially important as student workgroup members’ perspectives were not reflected in the existing research that meets the standards for comparative effectiveness research.

Attendees discussed the major barriers and solutions to increasing the accessibility of higher education for students with mental health disabilities, with a specific emphasis on accommodations, crisis response, and reintegration. Attendees heard from Monica Porter Gilbert, JD, of the Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law, who shared some of the trends in disability rights in higher education as some of the workgroup and research recommendations may conflict with existing laws or school policies. Then, Nev Jones, PhD, discussed the project and project goals as well as the importance of patient-centeredness in research. Finally, the attendees participated in breakout sessions that were co-facilitated by project team leads and students across accommodations (Kelly Davis, MS, and Jill King), crisis response (Delisha Thompson, MPP, and Arthy Suresh), and reintegration ( Nev Jones, PhD, and Chandler Morrell) based on their expertise and experiences. Leaders from each group reported their group findings, and the project team closed with a student reflection and ongoing opportunities to stay connected and involved.

**Key Findings**

During the convening, attendees self-selected into three breakout groups focused on accommodations, crisis response, and reintegration. In accommodations, the group discussed traditional stigma-reduction models, including how more stigmatized experiences are often excluded, and discussed the importance of healthcare navigators, peer support, faculty education, and universal accessibility principles. The crisis response group primarily focused on the lack of research on crisis response in higher education specifically and a wide range of growing alternatives outside of campus, including warmlines and mobile crisis response, that could also be applied to campuses. The crisis group spent a considerable amount of time discussing any policy barriers and students rights issues that may conflict with recommendations. Finally, the re-integration group, which consisted of programs with the largest evidence-base, discussed which models and approaches feel most relevant for students and used insights from the student workgroup meetings to guide further discussion.

Overall, the attendees reported an absence of opportunities to collaborate with or convene with others focused on mental health disabilities in higher education. Non-researchers, including students, administrators, and advocates, also noted the difficulty in getting involved in the research process as well as the challenges when advocating for community-driven and disability-focused programs that have not historically been funded. In addition to the absence of opportunities for collaboration, it was largely agreed upong by all members that not only if there little research in this area but also the research does not reflect student priorities, making it difficult to compare existing research.

**Dissemination Plans**

The convening was recording; however, due to privacy concerns from participants disclosing sensitive lived experiences, we are not posting the video in its entirety on YouTube. Instead, we will provide short videos highlighting the perspectives of participants and campus leaders and have solicited blogs for attendees to discuss their experiences and work. Additionally, we will be hosting a webinar via Mental Health America, in collaboration with the Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law and the University of Pittsburgh, to discuss the events and findings. Further, we will host the webinar recording and webinars, alongside blogs from attendees, on our project website.