Developmental Changes as a Parent

UNIVERSITY RESOURCES FOR STUDENTS & PARENTS

BISHOP JOSEPH JOHNSON BLACK CULTURAL CENTER
(615) 322-2524
vanderbilt.edu/bcc

EQUAL OPPORTUNITY, AFFIRMATIVE ACTION, & DISABILITY SERVICES
(615) 322-4705
vanderbilt.edu/ead

HOUSING & RESIDENTIAL EDUCATION
(615) 322-2591
vanderbilt.edu/ResEd/main

INTERNATIONAL STUDENT & SCHOLAR SERVICES
(615) 322-2753
vanderbilt.edu/isss

LGBTQI LIFE
(615) 322-3330
vanderbilt.edu/lgbtqi

MARGARET CUNNINGHAM WOMEN’S CENTER
(615) 322-4843
vanderbilt.edu/WomensCenter

PARENTS & FAMILY PROGRAMS
(615) 343-7370
vanderbilt.edu/families

PROJECT SAFE CENTER
(615) 322-SAFE (7233)
vanderbilt.edu/projectsafe

UNIVERSITY CHAPLAIN & RELIGIOUS LIFE
(615) 322-2457
vanderbilt.edu/religiouslife

VANDERBILT UNIVERSITY POLICE DEPARTMENT
(615) 343-9750
police.vanderbilt.edu
YOUR ROLE AS A COLLEGE PARENT

Each student experiences the transition to college in a unique way. Your student will likely go through a range of emotions as they begin this exciting and challenging journey of self-discovery. During this time, your student will face interpersonal challenges and academic pressures, which will deepen their self-identity development.

A student’s transition to college can also be an exciting and difficult adjustment for parents. It can be especially challenging to balance providing support for your student as they navigate the college experience, while also encouraging their independence. College students will continue to turn to their parents for guidance and parents have a great impact on their student’s wellness, decision making, and behavior. Parents have the opportunity to strengthen their student’s resiliency and positive coping mechanisms through support, encouragement, and trust.

During the college transition, it is important to pay attention to your student’s emotional health. Be aware of any significant changes in your student’s behavior and wellness and address it effectively. If your student has a diagnosed mental illness, it is crucial to develop a transition plan for continued treatment at Vanderbilt. Parents should be familiar with the resources available on Vanderbilt’s campus and encourage their student to seek help when necessary.

COMMUNICATION TIPS

- Develop a communication plan with your student. How often will you communicate? Who will be responsible for contacting whom? Does your student prefer phone calls, emails, texts, Skype?
- When you do talk, listen carefully to what your student is saying and be careful not to overreact. A positive conversation with your student makes it more likely that they will continue to confide in you.
- Listen for cues that your student might be struggling and know what campus resources are available for you and your student to turn to for support.
- Communicate openly with your student about your concerns.
- Be patient—healthy communication is a process.
- Let your student know that you appreciate their willingness to be open with you.

COMING HOME

When your student returns home for visits, you might be nervous to see how your relationship has changed. It is important to communicate before the visit. Some topics you might want to discuss:

- Will your student need to schedule any appointments (doctor, dentist, haircut) while home?
- Will your student be staying at home during their entire visit or do they have plans to leave to visit others?
- Does your student need to expect any changes in the family or in the house when returning home?

Tips for visits home:

- Try not to overschedule the visit; your student will need time for rest.
- Take some time to talk to your student about their college experience and acknowledge the positive changes that you see.
- Don’t forget to take time to just be together with your student.

VANDERBILT PSYCHOLOGICAL AND COUNSELING CENTER
(615) 322-2571 medschool.vanderbilt.edu/pcc

The Vanderbilt PCC is available to support mental health needs of all students to help them reach their academic and personal goals. The PCC’s psychologists, licensed counselors, and psychiatric medical providers collaborate with students to provide evidence-based treatment plans tailored to each individual’s unique background and needs. They address a range of student needs including stress management, crisis intervention, substance abuse counseling, management of medications, individual counseling, group counseling, ADHD assessments, biofeedback, and psychiatric assessment and treatment. The PCC also emphasizes prevention through outreach and consultation focused on the development of the skills and self-awareness needed to excel in a challenging educational environment. PCC staff members are available by phone for consultations with parents if you are concerned about your student’s mental health.

Additional VU Health and Wellness Resources

Student Health and Wellness
(615) 322-0480 vanderbilt.edu/healthydores

Student Health Center
(615) 322-2427 medschool.vanderbilt.edu/student-health