



The Ruderman White Paper on Mental Health in the Ivy League

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With expertise in program evaluation, qualitative and quantitative methods, and multi-site studies, she has worked with a wide range of local, federal, and private foundation clients. Some of her ongoing projects in post-secondary education include evaluating services to students with disabilities and efforts to improve workforce development education programs in Montana community colleges.

Table of Contents

Executive Summary...	5
Introduction...	8
Mental Health on Campus: The Legal Context...	10
The College Mental Health Crisis...	12
The Leave of Absence...	18
High Profile Cases...	19
What's in a Good Policy...	23
The Grades...	28
What the Policies Don't Tell Us...	31
Conclusion...	32
Appendix...	34

Executive Summary

Background

Mental health disabilities are pervasive on college campuses. According to the [American College Health Association](#), 40% of undergraduates have felt so depressed within the past twelve months that it was difficult for them to function. More than 10% of undergraduates have seriously considered suicide during the past year. Meanwhile, college resources provide woefully inadequate support to students. Current estimates suggest that there is one mental health clinician for every 1000 – 2000 students on smaller campuses, and one clinician for every 2000 – 3500 students on larger campuses ([Beresin](#), 2017).

Focus and Findings

This paper focuses on one aspect of the mental health climate on college campuses – the provision or imposition of leaves of absence for students who are experiencing mental illness. A leave of absence is potentially useful to the student; students can use the time away from academic demands to focus on well being and recovery. However, schools may also use the leave of absence as a tool for discrimination, pushing students out of school who are entitled by law to receive accommodations and supports which would enable them to stay ([Kadvany](#), 2018).

This paper examines the leave of absence policies of the eight Ivy League schools, and points to components of the policies that are ambiguous at best and discriminatory at worst. The Ivy League schools were selected as the sample for this paper because they represent the most elite institutions of higher education in our nation, and should therefore lead the field in practices that promote inclusion and support for students with mental health disabilities. Ivy League leave of absence policies received grades according to 15 indicators (listed in the Appendix). The indicators capture the extent to which policies are transparent (so that students know what to

expect if on leave and if and under what conditions they will be allowed to return from leave), supportive (so that students know how to access campus resources while they are at school and during their leave) and inclusive (so that leaves of absence are not used in a discriminatory way to exclude students). Each school received a final grade reflecting the extent to which the policy demonstrates institutional support for students with mental health disabilities. Key findings include:

- The highest grade received by any of the schools was a D+ (for the University of Pennsylvania). Currently, the leave of absence policies do not reflect institutional commitment to supporting students with mental health disabilities.
- Findings pertaining to four specific indicators include:
 - *Four of the Ivy League schools (50%) have policies that include ‘community disruption’ as grounds for an involuntary leave of absence.* When there is not a threat to the safety of others, behaviors that are a manifestation of a disability should not result in exclusion. Courts have ruled that discrimination on the basis of disability-caused behavior is the same thing as discrimination on the basis of disability, which violates federal law ([Gambini v. Total Renal Care, Inc.](#)). Similarly, help-seeking behaviors, such as requesting a wellness check or informing friends of suicidal thoughts and seeking assistance can be broadly labeled “disruptive”, and can unjustly result in exclusion. We call on the schools to remove ‘community disruption’ as grounds for involuntary leave.
 - *Four of the schools (50%) prohibit students from visiting campus while they are on leave.* This means that students who are taking time away from the academic demands in order to focus on their own well being become socially isolated, as

they are banned from coming to campus even to share a meal with friends. We call on these schools to remove this prohibition from their leave of absence policy.

- *Half of the schools' policies (50%) do not mention entitlement to reasonable accommodations to mitigate the need for a leave.* According to the Americans with Disabilities Act, students with disabilities are entitled to receive reasonable accommodations, some of which could enable students to stay in school instead of taking a leave of absence. We call on the schools to inform students of their rights and to increase transparency in their policies, so that students know that they are entitled to receive support to facilitate their inclusion on campus.
- *The majority of the schools (five out of eight, or 62.5%) have policies that include a minimum length of time for a leave of absence.* The trajectory of mental illness and treatment varies from one person to the next, and the student should be allowed to return whenever he or she is ready. If there is a minimum length for leaves of absence in general (including leaves not pertaining to mental health), the policy should include a statement noting that students with disabilities are entitled to modification of the time restriction – this modification is an example of a reasonable accommodation, under the Americans with Disabilities Act.
- Eleven additional indicators are also examined, and findings are presented in the paper.

This paper also illuminates stories from several high profile cases, where courageous students from Ivy League schools have told their stories of struggle and discrimination. The findings demonstrate that the Ivy League schools, the most elite institutions in our nation, are

failing to lead the sector of higher education in supporting students with mental health disabilities.

Throughout the paper, the term “college” or “school” refers colleges and universities, and the paper focuses on undergraduate students within these institutions of higher education, although the issues are relevant for graduate students as well.

Conclusion

When it comes to inclusion of students with mental health disabilities, the Ivy League schools do not provide the leadership that the landscape of higher education desperately needs. We call on the Ivy League universities to support all of their students, including those with mental health disabilities. These universities should revise their leave of absence policies so that the policies reflect institutional dedication to supporting all students.

Introduction

There is a college mental health crisis in the United States ([Beresin, 2017](#)). According to data from the [American College Health Association National College Health Assessment](#), within the past twelve months, 40% of undergraduates surveyed reported that they had felt so depressed that it was difficult for them to function. More than ten percent (12.9%) of undergraduate respondents had seriously considered suicide within the past year, and the vast majority (86.9%) had less emergent but still serious mental health concerns. This is a crisis that is unique to the college campus; prevalence rates of mental illness among college students are far larger than prevalence rates for age-matched non-college individuals ([Healthline, 2018](#)). Meanwhile, college resources provide woefully inadequate support to students. Current estimates suggest that there is one mental health clinician for every 1000 to 2000 students among schools with

fewer than ten thousand students, and one clinician for every 2000 to 3500 students among larger schools ([Beresin, 2017](#)).

The scope of the problem, combined with the lack of resources available to address the problem, is exerting a horrible toll. Suicide is among the most tragic consequences of untreated mental illness and it is the second leading cause of death of college students ([National Council on Disability, 2017](#)). Colleges are also paying a financial price associated with the college mental health crisis. College students with mental illness *who do not receive treatment* are less likely to graduate than their peers, and increasing graduation rates is financially profitable for institutions of higher education ([National Council on Disability, 2017](#)). If colleges could figure out a way to provide reliable access to high quality treatment, they would enjoy higher graduation rates and accompanying financial benefits. This paper explores the landscape of the college mental health crisis, with a particular focus on college leave of absence policies, and the extent to which they fail to support students.

The college mental health crisis, and the schools' responses, do not exist in a vacuum, but rather reflect and are informed by key federal legislation, as described below. This description of legislation is followed by a more in-depth discussion of the college mental health crisis, and how schools can respond. The white paper then focuses on the eight Ivy League schools (the schools that are supposedly the leaders which all other schools strive to emulate) – and one way in which the eight Ivys and other schools around the country are confronting the college mental health crisis –encouraging (or imposing) leaves of absences for students who are experiencing mental illness. As this paper describes, while a leave of absence is potentially useful to both the student and the school, many schools also use the leave of absence as a tool for discrimination, pushing students out of school who may otherwise have been supported to stay. This

discrimination has been brought to light in several high profile cases, where courageous students from Ivy League schools have told their stories of struggle and discrimination. Discrimination and lack of support are also evident in the leave of absence policies themselves, and this paper concludes with an evaluation of the policies from the eight Ivys. We as a nation must demand that our most elite institutions are role models in the quest for civil rights. When it comes to civil rights of students with mental health disabilities, the Ivy League schools do not provide the leadership that the landscape of higher education so desperately needs.

Mental Health on Campus: The Legal Context

According to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), a person is considered to have a disability if that person meets one of the following three criteria:

- A physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities of an individual
- A record of such impairment
- Being regarded as having such impairment

In the context of higher education, a report from the [National Council on Disability](#) states,

When applied to higher education settings, a mental health disability is defined as a persistent psychological or psychiatric disorder, emotional or mental illness that adversely affects educational performance. A mental health disability is a condition which: 1.) is listed in the most current American Psychiatric Association Diagnostic and Statistical Manual and / or the ADA, as amended, and / or the International Classification of Diseases (ICD); 2.) reflects a psychiatric or psychological condition that interferes with a major life activity; and 3.) poses a functional limitation in the educational settings ([National Council on Disability](#), 2017, p. 11)

The legal inclusion of mental illness under the disability umbrella is important because disability is entitled to civil rights protections under the ADA. The ADA has been hailed as a “pillar of civil rights,” as it forbids exclusion and discrimination across all sectors of society, including employment, transportation, education, and more ([Obama](#), 2013). Title II of the law states, “No

qualified individual with a disability shall, by reason of such disability, be excluded from participation in or be denied the benefits of the services, programs, or activities of a public entity, or be subjected to discrimination by any such entity” 42 U.S. Code § 12132 (1990). Title III of the ADA extends the mandate against discrimination to private universities 42 U.S.C. §12182(a). Because mental illness is included under the umbrella of disability, the federal protection against discrimination on the basis of disability applies to college students with mental illness.

More specifically, under Title II of the ADA, colleges are required to make reasonable modifications to accommodate students with disabilities. An accommodation is reasonable if it does not “fundamentally alter” the educational program, and if it does not impose an “undue burden” on the school (or on an individual instructor at the school) 42 U.S.C. § 12182(b)(2)(A)(ii). Burdens may be financial (i.e., it might be prohibitively expensive to renovate an entire building) or they may be overly time consuming for the instructor, for administrative staff, or any other professional at the school.

In addition to the ADA, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 is the other federal law that has shaped the landscape of non-discrimination on the basis of disability. According to Section 504, “No otherwise qualified individual with handicaps in the United States... shall, solely by reason of his or her handicap, be excluded from the participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance” 29 U.S.C. § 794 et seq. Virtually every college and university receives some federal funding, and therefore these institutions of higher education fall under the domain of this law.

Thus, we have strong federal legislation to ensure nondiscrimination on the basis of disability, whether that disability is visible or invisible, in the case of mental illness. The following section examines the college mental health crisis in great depth, and is followed by a focus on the eight most elite schools in our nation, the Ivy League schools. Specifically, the paper focuses on one aspect of the mental health context on campus – the leave of absence.

The College Mental Health Crisis

[The Healthy Minds Study](#) (HMS) examines the landscape of mental health and service utilization on more than 100 college campuses across the country. The annual web-based survey collected data from more than 16,000 graduate and undergraduate students in 2017. Results from this national study reveal astonishing rates of mental illness among undergraduate students. One third of undergraduate students (33%) reported experiencing depression, 15% reported experiencing major depression, 27% experienced anxiety, and 12% had thought about or imagined suicide. These rates are higher than the rates in the overall general population, and they are also higher than rates for young adults of college age who are not enrolled in college. For example, 6.7% of adults in the United States experienced major depression in 2016, and 10.9% of adults between the ages of 18 and 25 experienced major depression ([Healthline](#), 2018). Both of these prevalence rates are significantly lower than the prevalence of major depression among college students, as reported by [HMS](#) (15%).

Why do so many college students experience mental illness? For many people, mental illness first manifests between the ages of 18 and 24 ([National Alliance on Mental Illness](#), 2018). College is a time of transition, and transition is inherently stressful. As described in a report by the [National Council on Disability](#), “For many students, college is their first attempt at independent living, one they undertake while trying to balance a high level of academic

achievement and adjusting to a new social environment” (Mental Health on College Campuses: Investments, Accommodations Needed to Address Student Needs, 2017, p. 21). At the same time, we are seeing a rise in enrollment of students with *pre-existing* mental health conditions – conditions that emerged before they started college. College enrollment rates are up overall, and this means that more people with and without mental illness are more likely to go to college. Also, because high school students with mental illness are receiving more sophisticated and impactful supports during their high school careers, these students are now more likely than they were in the past to complete high school and enroll in college. Finally, college enrollment rates of individuals from marginalized groups, including LGBTQ students, foster youth, and first-generation youth, are on the rise (Scobey, 2016). This is a wonderful development, as it represents increased access to higher education for groups that have traditionally been excluded from opportunities for economic and social advancement. But since people from these groups have extensive experience with marginalization, they are at heightened risk for mental illness. They arrive to college in need of support.

Unfortunately, more often than not, college students do not receive this essential support. As noted previously, current estimates suggest that there is one mental health clinician for every 1000 to 2000 students among schools with fewer than ten thousand students, and one clinician for every 2000 to 3500 students among larger schools ([Beresin, 2017](#)). [One third](#) of undergraduate students experience depression during the course of a school year. If there is one clinician for every 3500 students, and one third of these students require support, that means that there is one clinician for every 1166 students in need. Clearly, the infrastructure of support services is not sufficient to address the growing need.

Given this lack of support infrastructure, it should come as no surprise that the majority (61%) of college students who met diagnostic criteria for a mental illness were not receiving any treatment ([National Council on Disability](#), 2017). Virtually all schools (97%) report that their counseling centers have waiting lists, with the waiting period spanning from a couple of days to more than a month ([National Council on Disability](#), 2017). Mental illness, in combination with the lack of support, can have catastrophic consequences. In 2014, the vast majority (86%) of college students who died by suicide did not receive professional help from their school's counseling center ([National Council on Disability](#), 2017).

While these statistics are grim, there is also some good news. When college students receive professional treatment for mental illness, this treatment is effective. Currently, college students with mental illness *who do not receive treatment* have lower grade point averages and are more likely to drop out of school than their peers without mental illness. However, as concluded by the [National Council on Disability report](#), “when students get support, they are successful.” The challenge, it seems, is not to eradicate mental illness from college campuses, but to figure out how to adequately provide support for students who need it.

Clearly, colleges need to invest in increasing the availability of mental health professionals on campus. One clinician for every one thousand students is not enough, and this ratio represents the availability of clinicians on the campuses with the most resources. Besides lack of clinicians, what are some other ways for colleges to take steps forward?

Colleges should engage in campus-wide initiatives that raise awareness about mental health and reduce stigma surrounding mental illness. According to the [National Alliance on Mental Illness](#) (NAMI), 75% of chronic mental health conditions begin in adolescence or young adulthood, before an individual reaches the age of 24. And for adolescents and young adults, the

average length of time after symptom onset and before service access is *eight to ten years* ([NAMI](#)). This lag is a result of multiple factors, stigma and lack of awareness being key among them. Young people do not understand the symptoms they are experiencing, they are ashamed to ask for help, or they do not know where to go to access help. Campus-wide education initiatives can serve as powerful tools to raise awareness and eradicate stigma.

Colleges also need to train faculty and students on issues related to accommodations for mental illness. Under Title II of the ADA, colleges are required to make reasonable modifications to accommodate students with disabilities. An accommodation is reasonable if it does not “fundamentally alter” the educational program, and if it does not impose an “undue burden” on the school (or on an individual instructor at the school). Surveys have found that faculty members currently view accommodations as “unfair advantages” for students, especially if the disability that requires an accommodation is invisible ([National Council on Disability, 2017](#)). Faculty need to understand their legal obligation to students with mental illness, and hopefully adopt the view that accommodations are an issue of civil rights, and not an issue of cheating or taking the easy way out. Students need training as they might be aware of the existence of disability protections but not realize that mental illness such as depression is considered a disability under the law. Other steps that colleges can take to improve the mental health climate on campus include having more diversity amongst their counseling staff, employing psychiatrists as well as counselors, using online support, establishing mental health kiosks, implementing peer support programs, and partnering with community resources.

Colleges also need to ensure that their policies avoid discrimination and encourage students to seek help, if needed. College leaders likely have the best of intentions with regard to addressing the college mental health crisis, and undoubtedly want to do the right thing. They

want to improve access to counseling services on campus, raise awareness about mental health and eradicate stigma, and train faculty. At the same time, however, it is a scary time for college leaders. Suicide on campus leads to negative press coverage for the college; when Graham Burton died by suicide in his dormitory at Hamilton College, the New York Times covered it in an article entitled [His College Knew of His Despair. His Parents Didn't, Until it was Too Late](#). In this article, the author questioned the moral obligation of the school to reach out to parents of struggling students, before it is too late. After a suicide at Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court ruled that MIT was not legally responsible for the student's suicide, but also maintained that "colleges and universities do hold some responsibility in protecting students from suicide" ([WBUR](#), 2018). Therefore, in addition to the fear of negative media coverage, colleges also fear that they may be found legally responsible for students who die by suicide. This fear of liability may color administrators' reactions and may motivate college leaders to remove students with mental health disabilities from campus ([Henderson & Davis-Millis](#), 2006). Administrators have acknowledged that due to fear of liability, they may question the judgment of mental health experts and substitute their own judgment, forcing "students who appear to be at risk to be hospitalized or to withdraw from the university, even though such steps may be contrary to and disrupt or terminate altogether, and treatment the student may have been receiving" ([Henderson & Davis-Millis](#), 2006). When students fear exclusion, they may be afraid to disclose their mental health disabilities, and forego needed support. For example, if students with mild depression know that disclosing this information could result in them being excluded from campus, they are not likely to seek treatment.

A leave of absence from college can be a much-needed time for a student to step back from the pressures of campus life, receive mental health treatment, and then return to campus healthier and more prepared to take advantage of all that college has to offer. However, leave of absences are too often imposed on students with mental illness against their will in situations where other less-drastring alternatives were not explored (i.e., providing reasonable accommodations which would enable the student to stay on campus such as extensions, incompletes, and reduced course loads). Also, often times the procedures for taking and returning from voluntary leaves of absence are not clear, discouraging students from taking a voluntary leave. Students may be discouraged from seeking a leave of absence if it is not clear that their confidentiality will be protected. Return policies may be seen as intrusive or onerous (place burdensome requirements on students or require clearance too far in advance of the semester start date). Colleges may also require that students take so much time away from school that leaves are unappealing. Leaves may also not be available at times when students need them the most, such as during exam weeks. Colleges often also enforce exclusionary policies in conjunction with required leaves, such as prohibiting students from visiting campus while on leave, requiring leaves in response to “disruptive behavior” that does not pose a threat to that student or to others, and other policies and practices that fail to uphold the spirit of the ADA. The following sections of this paper describe leave of absence policies as they are intended. Next the paper examines high profile cases regarding leaves of absence at the eight Ivy League schools, and finally evaluates the policies as they actually exist within the eight Ivy League schools. The paper concludes with a call to action for the Ivy League schools to lead the nation in non-discrimination.

The Leave of Absence

Virtually every college and university allows students to take a leave of absence for any assortment of personal reasons. Students may use the time to volunteer, travel, complete an internship, or engage in any number of other activities. To some extent, colleges encourage their students to take leaves if the time away would bolster their personal or professional growth. The [Harvard Crimson](#) posted an article with the following byline: *Roughly one in 20 students take a leave of absence from Harvard every year. But no two stories are the same.* The [University of Pennsylvania website](#) describes a leave of absence as follows, “Students take time away from their studies for a wide variety of reasons, including to work on a political campaign, manage a medical concern, fulfill a family obligation, pursue career-related opportunities, complete military service, take a break... While interrupting one’s studies to take time away may seem intimidating, a leave is a means to the successful completion of a degree, not a barrier to graduating.”

In an ideal situation, a student would recognize that he or she is struggling with a mental health condition, and work with school personnel to determine whether or not the school environment is conducive to the wellbeing of that student. The student would understand the supports and accommodations that are available, and he or she would be able to easily and efficiently access those supports and accommodations. If the available supports are not comprehensive enough to meet the needs of that student, or if the student would benefit from time away from the stressors associated with campus life, that student would opt to take a leave of absence in order to get well and return to campus refreshed and more able to take advantage of all that campus life has to offer.

Unfortunately, in the current landscape of the “college mental health crisis,” the notion that a leave of absence is a means for recovery and successful return is too often not reflected in the actual experiences of students. Several high profile cases from Ivy League schools demonstrate student’s experiences of how leave of absence policies have been implemented in ways that are confusing at best and discriminatory at worst. A few of these high profile examples are described below, from the perspective of the student. Finally, the actual leave policies of the eight Ivy League schools are examined and scored according to fifteen indicators (listed on page 23), yielding the conclusion that the most elite universities in our nation receive “failing grades” in their inclusion of students with mental health disabilities.

High Profile Cases

Princeton University

In 2014, a student filed a [lawsuit](#) against Princeton University, alleging that the school’s imposition of a leave of absence violated the Americans with Disabilities Act, the New Jersey Law Against Discrimination, the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and the Fair Housing Act Amendments (W.P. v. Princeton, case No. 3:2014cv01893 (D.N.J. 2014)). The student attempted suicide by swallowing pills, and then walked to the student health center to report his attempt and receive medical attention ([Aviv](#), 2014). When he was eventually released from the hospital a few days later, school personnel informed him that he could not attend classes or return to his dorm. He was told that if he did not take a voluntary leave, he would be placed on an involuntary leave – the latter would appear on his transcript and the former would not. Over the next few weeks, the student requested accommodations that would enable him to take care of his mental health while he simultaneously remained enrolled in the University. He asked if he could live off campus and / or take a reduced course load. His psychiatrist submitted a letter to

the University stating that the student was not a threat to himself. The letter also stated, “An important aspect of xxx’s recovery is a sense of purpose. Requiring a leave of absence and excluding him from the university community at this time could be detrimental to his health and well being” ([Aviv](#), 2014). Princeton denied the student’s appeal to forego the leave of absence, claiming that the requested accommodations (living off campus and taking a reduced course load) would “fundamentally alter the nature of a Princeton education” ([Aviv](#), 2014). This dispute led to a lawsuit, followed by a compliance review of Princeton completed by the United States Department of Justice. The USDOJ and Princeton reached an agreement in resolution of the compliance review. Princeton said that the Department “did not make any findings of noncompliance, but asked Princeton to update its policy language to better explain university procedures and options available to students with disabilities, which Princeton has agreed to do” ([Evans](#), 2016). While the compliance review did not result in a finding of discrimination, Princeton has acknowledged that their policies and procedures lacked clarity. Clarity, moreover, is a critical buffer against discrimination.

Yale University

An [article](#) that appeared in the Atlantic reads,

On January 25, 2015, Luchang Wang swiped into her residential college at Yale for the last time. It was a Sunday -- a day that many Yale students spend in the library, stressed as they prepare for the week ahead. At some point in the next two days, Wang, a sophomore math major, left New Haven and boarded a plane for San Francisco, using a one-way ticket she had ordered online. She would not be coming back. At 1:26 p.m. on Tuesday, January 27, Wang posted a worrying status on Facebook that sent students and administrators frantically searching for her whereabouts. It read, in part: Dear Yale: I loved being here. I only wish I could’ve had some time. I needed time to work things out and wait for new medication to kick in, but I couldn’t do it in school, and I couldn’t bear the thought of having to leave for a full year, or of leaving and never being readmitted. Love, Luchang. About five hours later, Jonathan Holloway, the dean of Yale College, informed the school via email that Wang had died in an ‘apparent suicide.’

The fact that Wang's suicide note explicitly mentioned Yale's withdrawal and readmission policies sparked an outcry from within the student body. Wang's note said that she didn't want to leave for a full year, referencing the policies of many schools which require minimum lengths of time away. Her note also said that she was uncertain about the likelihood that she would be readmitted following a leave of absence for reasons related to mental health. The complexity and burdensome nature of return policies and procedures related to return is another way in which schools are breeding confusion at best, and discrimination at worst. One result is that students are hesitant to disclose information about their mental health, and reluctant to try to access services when they need them. Students are feared of being pushed out of school for long periods of time (periods of time that are perhaps longer than they need for their recovery). They are also scared that they won't be allowed to return to school when they are ready. [The Atlantic](#) reported, "According to several Yale undergraduates, some of whom asked for anonymity, there is a significant fear on campus that the administration will force mentally ill students to leave; there's also a related fear that sick students will not be allowed to return. As a result, students suffering from anxiety, depression, and other disorders may not be getting the treatment they need. And for many of those who are, the question soon becomes: How much should I open up?" Leave of absence policies, as they are currently implemented, are exacerbating the college mental health crisis. They are preventing students from accessing the care and support that is available on campus.

Brown University

An article that appeared in [Buzz Feed](#) in 2015 tells the story of Dave, a student at Brown who was required by the school to take a forced medical leave. The story begins, "Early in the morning on October 20, 2014, Dave woke up to the Northwestern University campus police

knocking on his dorm room door. They were there to tell Dave, a visiting student at the school, that he had received an urgent no-contact order. But it wasn't from a person. It was from the Ivy League university that Dave had been trying desperately to return to after a forced medical leave. The police read the letter aloud, which was signed by Brown's chief of police, in earshot of Dave's curious floormates. 'Effective immediately, you are prohibited from contacting anyone from Brown University, either by email or phone calls,' it said. From now on, Dave was allowed to contact Brown, where he was technically still a student, "only by hard-copy correspondence."

This encounter with the Northwestern police was humiliating for Dave, and it was the culmination of a long struggle with Brown. Dave had taken an involuntary medical leave from Brown University, and six months after this leave, he applied for re-entry with the support and green light from his psychiatrist. The school denied his application, noting that Dave showed a "lack of insight" into the behaviors that led to his leave initially. Dave became angry and frustrated by the vague criteria for readmittance, and engaged in extensive and hostile back and forth with the administration. After a certain point, Brown issued the no-contact order, and Dave was "cut off" from this ongoing dialogue. According to Dave's lawyer, as quoted in [Buzz Feed](#), "Once a student is on leave, they are very closely scrutinized and their behaviors and words, including normal expressions of frustration with the readmission process, are pathologized. The students are treated as if they have an anger problem or personality disorder. It's not surprising that they might be frustrated and act out when they are trying their hardest to come back." An essential question, then, is whether students on leave are held to standards that do not apply to students on campus. Dave's lawyer remarked, "Too often, it seems that schools are looking for these students to be completely cured and super healthy, a standard they don't apply to other students."

The stories reviewed thus far are from Princeton, Brown, and Yale Universities. All three of these institutions are part of the Ivy League. The issue of ambiguous and potentially discriminatory leave of absence policies is not confined to the Ivy League. A student sued Quinnipiac University in 2012 after the University placed her on mandatory medical leave, claiming that the school violated the ADA in its refusal to offer accommodations that would have enabled her to stay in school. The United States Department of Justice and the University reached a settlement, and the student expressed her hopes that this case would “encourage students to come forward if they need to get mental health help” ([Megan](#), 2015). Clearly, the problem is a pervasive one across the landscape of colleges and universities. This white paper focuses on the eight Ivy League schools because they are the most elite, and therefore should lead the nation in nondiscrimination and support for students with mental health disabilities.

What’s in a Good Policy?

Schools must protect the safety of their students, and there is no doubt that a student who poses a threat to the safety of others should be removed from campus. But how should policies be as non-discriminatory as possible, and serve as tools to facilitate instead of impede recovery? This section contains a list of policy elements that should be included and / or avoided in order to advance inclusion, minimize the potential for discrimination, and promote the health and well being of entire campus communities. The indicators and grading criteria below were developed in consultation with leading national experts on college mental health, including each of the contributors to this white paper. Please see the section on contributors for more information about their professional background. The indicators are as follows:

1. The policy should not include “threat to self” as grounds for an involuntary leave of absence. An organization called Disability Rights Advocates issued a Class Certification Motion in a case involving Stanford University, and in this motion they write: “... under Title III of the ADA and the Rehabilitation Act, risk to the student herself is not a basis to find “direct threat.” Citing 42 U.S.C. § 12182(b)(3); 28 C.F.R. § 36.104. Further, “The ADA

defines ‘direct threat’ as ‘a significant risk to the health or safety of others that cannot be eliminated by a modification of policies, practices, or procedures or by the provision of auxiliary aids or services” Citing 42 U.S.C. § 12182(b)(3). And, “If the risk is to the student herself, the decision about how to weigh that risk is in the hands of the students and her doctors; it is not a legal basis for program exclusion.”

It is important to acknowledge that the ADA does include threat to self as a justification for exclusion from employment. It remains silent on exclusion from public and private schools. If there is language about threat to self, the policy received a score of 1. If there is no language about threat to self, the policy received a score of 3.

2. The involuntary leave policy should include language about accommodations. According to the ADA, colleges and universities are required to provide reasonable accommodations to students with disabilities, including mental health disabilities. Further, according to the implementing regulation by the Department of Justice, an involuntary leave for a student who poses a direct threat to others requires an individualized assessment and consideration of whether reasonable accommodations would avoid the need for the leave. (see § 35.108 § 35.139). The policy should acknowledge that an involuntary leave of absence is only appropriate when reasonable accommodations would not mitigate the need for the absence. This information in the policy creates transparency so that students are aware of their rights and are able to request accommodations to which they are entitled to avoid an involuntary leave. If there is no language about accommodations, the policy received a score of 1. Policies that mention accommodations without mention of individualized assessment received a score of 2. Policies that mention accommodations based on individualized assessment received a score of 3.
3. While colleges may impose legitimate safety requirements for safe operation, they must ensure that those requirements are based on actual risks, not mere speculation, stereotypes, or generalizations about individuals with disabilities (see 28 C.F.R. §35.130(h)). Policies should include language against implementation of involuntary leaves of absence that stem from generalization, fear, or stereotype pertaining to students with mental health disabilities. If there is language against generalization, fear, or stereotype, the policy received a score of 3. If there is no language against generalization, fear, or stereotype, the policy received a score of 1.
4. Policies should not list “community disruption” as a reason to impose a leave of absence on a student. Disability advocates whole-heartedly acknowledge that if a student is a threat to the safety of others, that student should be excluded. However, many colleges consider non-violent community disruption to be a basis for exclusion, and legal advocates posit that this is in violation of the ADA. In one case that examined the application of the ADA outside of the context of higher education, the court ruled that “conduct resulting from a disability is part of the disability and not a separate basis for termination” ([Gambini v. Total Renal Care, Inc.](#)). In this case, an employee was fired for outbursts at work that were directly related to her mental illness, and the court eventually ruled in her favor, concluding that her termination was discriminatory. Essentially, discrimination on the basis of disability-caused conduct is the same thing as discrimination on the basis of disability, which is illegal. The same logic applies to the imposition of involuntary leaves of absence due to “community disruption.” Also, the term community disruption is vague, overly broad, and very easily misapplied. If family members are concerned about a student, and contact the school to request a wellness check, the school may send campus police to check on the student. The presence of police in class or the dorm may improperly be considered “community disruption,” and grounds for involuntary leave. Similarly, if a student tells friends he or she is feeling suicidal and wants help, this could be improperly considered a disruption to other students. These examples illuminate a mechanism through which schools might exclude students with mental health disabilities unnecessarily and perhaps arbitrarily. If the policy lists community disruption as grounds for an involuntary leave of

- absence, it received a score of 1. If it does not include community disruption as grounds for involuntary absence, it received a score of 3.
5. The policy should empower students to work with mental health professionals of their choice, and respect the opinion of the students' mental health provider even if the professional is outside of the university system (see relevant decisions from [The Office for Civil Rights](#) and the [Department of Justice](#).) Some schools require students to receive approval for a leave (and also clearance to return) from student health services, and other schools allow the student to consult any health professional of their choosing, and the school grants a leave based on the recommendation of that health professional. The policy should at least state that it gives weight to the recommendations of the student's health care professional, even if the professional is outside of the school system. Ideally, the recommendation of the student's health care professional would be sufficient to grant a leave and / or clearance to return. Policies that indicate that weight is given to the recommendations of the student's health care professional received a 3. Policies that give authority to school professionals, without mention of weight to the recommendation of the student's health care professional, received a 1.
 6. The policy should specify that students can initiate the process for leave at any time, even after classes have ended. The period between the end of classes and the beginning of final exams is very stressful, and many mental illnesses are exacerbated during this time. If a policy provides a deadline by which students must initiate an application for a leave of absence, it received a score of 1. If there is no deadline, it received a score of 3.
 7. Policies and procedures should be transparent so that students know what to expect. The policy should state that involuntary leaves should be used only in exceptional situations. This is so that all students on campus can feel comfortable accessing needed mental health care without fear of being arbitrarily or unfairly placed on leave. Policies should also include language explaining that students are encouraged to take voluntary leaves of absence instead of involuntary leaves. Further, policies should include information about the likelihood of returning from leave and detailed information about the criteria that are considered when a student requests a leave and / or re-enrollment. The score on this indicator is perhaps the most subjective score in the rubric, but the reader is encouraged to refer to policies of [Dartmouth](#) and [Brown](#) for examples of ambiguous and transparent policies, respectively. If a policy has both of these elements (explicit statements that involuntary leave is rarely used, or language that encourages voluntary leave when needed; and detailed procedures and criteria for taking and returning from leave), it received a score of 3. If it has one element it received a score of 2. If it has neither element it received a score of 1.
 8. The policy should not specify a minimum length of time for the leave. The trajectory of mental illness and treatment varies from one person to the next, and the student on leave should be allowed to come back to school whenever he or she is ready. For example, a student adjusting to a change in medication or experiencing the side effects of a new medication may only need to be out for a few weeks to adjust or stop the medication. A longer leave is not necessary and may be detrimental. If there is a time restriction for leaves of absence (voluntary or involuntary), the policy should include a statement noting that students with disabilities are entitled to seek modification of the time restriction – this modification is an example of a reasonable accommodation. If the policy does specify a minimum leave without language about modification, it received a 1. Otherwise, it received a 3.
 9. The school should not specify a maximum duration or maximum number of leaves. Some policies permanently exclude students who take more than a specified number of leaves, stating that students cannot re-enter. If there is a maximum number or duration for leaves of absence (voluntary or involuntary), the policy should include a statement noting that students with

- disabilities are entitled to seek modification of the policy– this modification is an example of a reasonable accommodation. If the policy does specify a maximum duration or maximum number of leaves without language about accommodation, it received a 1. Otherwise, it received a 3.
10. The policy should identify a liaison or contact person at the school, to support the student and help the student remain connected to the school while he or she is on leave. This is in recognition of the fact that students on leave are still students of the school, and should receive school-based supports. If the policy identifies this person, it received a 3. If it does not identify this person, it received a 1.
 11. There should not be a blanket policy prohibiting students from visiting campus while they are on a leave of absence. For students who live in close proximity to the school while they are on leave, maintaining their social relationships may be key to their well being and recovery. Unfortunately, at many schools, students are excluded from the cafeteria in addition to the classroom while they are on leave. They are also excluded from visiting friends in their dorms, and from their email accounts. This leads to social isolation and compounds distress. If the policy prohibits students from visiting campus, it received a score of a 1. If it does not prohibit students from visiting campus, it received a 3. Note that some policies state that the school makes exceptions, for example for students who do not pose a threat to the safety of themselves or others. However, benefitting from this exception often requires receiving written permission from the school administration. Students should by default have the right to visit campus, unless safety is a concern. Therefore if a school issues a blanket prohibition, and mentions that exceptions are made, the school still received a 1.
 12. The policy should not include work or school requirements for the students while they are on leave (or if it does include this requirement, it should mention that a modification of these requirements is a reasonable accommodation for students with mental health disabilities). Students on leave for mental health reasons should be able to devote their time to their well being and recovery. Also, the requirement to take classes may be financially untenable for students, who may receive financial aid at one school but not to take classes at a second institution. In this example, the requirement may prevent the student from ever returning. If there are no work or school requirements (or if modification is mentioned), the policy received a 3. Otherwise, the policy received a 1. If it is a listed factor which is considered and it is not clear how much weight it is given, the policy received a 2.
 13. The policy should provide a deadline to apply for re-entry that is not too far in advance of the start of the semester so that there is not a defacto minimum length of leave, and so that students who are ready to return are not required to remain on leave longer than necessary. Policies that force students to re-apply too far in advance exclude students who are ready to return after the application deadline but before the start of the semester. Also, from the school perspective, a policy with a deadline too far in advance does not provide the administration with an accurate view of how the student is doing when they are coming back to campus. The student's condition may have changed significantly by the time they return. A deadline of three or more months before the start-date to apply for return is considered problematic (score of 1). Less than 3 months is considered a best practice (score of 3).
 14. The policy should mention efforts made to preserve the confidentiality of the student. The policy should also facilitate confidentiality by specifying that medical records (when requesting leave or applying for return) should be submitted to University health or counseling service, not to school administrators. If a policy includes both of these two elements (explicit mention of confidentiality and the ability to submit records to mental health services), it received a score of 3. If it has only one element, it received a score of 2. If it had neither element, it received a score of 1.

15. The policy should facilitate student participation in university housing when the student returns from leave. Housing on campus ensures students have appropriate, accessible housing, in close proximity to their friends and classes. Inability to obtain campus housing may prevent some students from returning from leave. Ideally, policies would enable students to provisionally register for housing before their application to return from leave is accepted; waiting until their application is accepted may preclude them from participation in university housing. Policies that do not facilitate participation in university housing received a score of 1; policies that do facilitate participation in university housing received a score of 3.

The following are additional considerations not included in the rubric, for reasons including lack of difference between the schools.

- The rubric includes a question about whether or not the policy states that the student is entitled to reasonable accommodations which would enable them to stay in school. Ideally, the policy would also provide concrete examples of accommodations that would be helpful for students with mental health disabilities, such as a reduced course load. None of the policies mentioned a reduced course load as an accommodation that would prevent the need for a leave of absence.
- Ideally, students would be able to receive incompletes for courses in progress, so that they can finish their courses without losing credit for the days or weeks that they already spent in class. However, none of the leave of absence policies mention incompletes. Incompletes are mentioned elsewhere on university websites, but these descriptions of incompletes do not mention students on leaves of absence.
- The involuntary leave policy should include a transparent *appeal* process that the student can follow to appeal the decision placing him or her on involuntary leave. In general, the policies do include appeal processes (with the exception of schools that do not mention involuntary leaves, such as University of Pennsylvania), so grading on this indicator would not help to differentiate between the schools.
- The policy should also specify the notation on the transcript, and there should be no difference in the notation between voluntary and involuntary leaves. The policies were not graded on this indicator because the language differed between schools (i.e., voluntary leave of absence vs. withdrawal), making direct comparison difficult.

For each indicator, each Ivy League school received a score of 1(problematic), 2 (ambiguous / room for improvement), or 3 (best practice). The grading was relatively straightforward, since the grades capture either the inclusion or exclusion of specific language in the policy.

This paper uses the term “leave of absence policies,” however, it is important to note that the policies may be called different things by the different institutions (i.e., mandatory health leave, withdrawal). Also, in some cases, information from different policies was extracted to provide a basis for a score for a particular indicator. For example, some involuntary leave of absence

policies do not explicitly address whether or not the student is prohibited from visiting campus while on leave. However, the voluntary leave of absence policy may prohibit students from visiting campus while on leave. In that case, it is inferred that students on involuntary leave are also subject to this prohibition, and the policy is scored accordingly. The explanation for each score (for each school, on each indicator) is provided in the Appendix. The explanations are linked to the actual online policies.

The Grades

The Appendix shows the scores that each Ivy League school received for each of the indicators listed above, with an explanation for each score. As mentioned above, the grading was relatively black and white, since the indicators measure the inclusion or exclusion of specific language. There were a few instances in which there was ambiguity; the rationale for each final grade is in the column titled “explanation” in the Appendix. In cases where the author and contributors were undecided between two grades, they provided the benefit of the doubt to the school, and gave the higher of the two grades in question. Table 1 (below) shows the final grades for each university; for each institution, the scores on each indicator were combined to yield a total score. This score was divided by 45 (the total number of possible points), to yield a percentage and a corresponding grade. The grading system is as follows:

Below 60%: F

60 – 63: D-

64- 67: D

68-69: D+

70 – 73: C –

74- 77: C

78-79: C+

Etc.

Table 1

The Grades

	Score	Letter Grade
Brown University	29/45	D
Columbia University	29/45	D
Cornell University	28/45	D-
Dartmouth	23/45	F
Harvard University	28/45	D-
Princeton University	29/45	D
University of Pennsylvania	31/45	D+
Yale University	24/45	F

Clearly, there is room for the schools to improve with regard to their support for and inclusion of students with mental health disabilities. Table 2, below, provides additional information about four especially salient criteria: whether the policy states that community disruption warrants involuntary leave; whether the policy prohibits students on leave from visiting campus; whether the policy specifies a minimum length of time for a leave of absence; and whether the policy communicates that students with disabilities are entitled to reasonable accommodations which may mitigate the need for a leave of absence.

Table 2

Salient indicators for each school

	Is “community disruption” grounds for involuntary leave? (no is ideal)	Are students on leave prohibited from visiting campus? (no is ideal)	Is there a minimum length of time for the leave? (no is ideal)	Does the policy communicate entitlement to accommodations based on individualized assessment? (yes is ideal)
Brown University	Yes	No	No	No
Columbia University	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Cornell University	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Dartmouth	No	Yes	No	No
Harvard University	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Princeton University	No	No	Yes	Yes
University of Pennsylvania	Yes	No	Yes	No
Yale University	No	Yes	Yes	No
Percentage of schools with best practice in place	50%	50%	37.5%	50%

These four indicators were chosen for their salience. First, “Community disruption” is broad and vague such that it can improperly be used to punish students who engage in help-seeking behaviors (i.e., sharing suicidal thoughts with their friends). Also, discrimination based on conduct caused by disability is the same thing as discrimination based on disability, and is illegal ([Gambini v. Total Renal Care, Inc.](#)). Therefore, “community disruption” as grounds for involuntary leave should be abolished from leave of absence policies. Second, there should not be blanket policies prohibiting students on leave from visiting campus, so that students can be supported and encouraged to maintain their social connectedness while taking time away from academic demands. Students who pose a threat to others may be excluded, but this should be the exception and not the rule, and determined on a case-by-case basis. Third, since trajectories of mental illness and treatment vary from one person to the next, students should be able to return to campus whenever they are ready, and not be constrained by policies identifying minimum

lengths of time for a leave. Finally, the Americans with Disabilities Act guarantees students with disabilities the right to reasonable accommodations which might mitigate the need for a leave; the policy should make this clear so that students are encouraged to exercise this right.

Also, these four indicators were selected because it would be relatively easy for colleges to amend their policies to reflect best practices on each of these indicators. We call on the Ivy League schools to do that, and in so doing, to take one important step towards supporting students with mental health disabilities.

What the Policies Don't Tell Us

The formal written policies provide information about the extent to which the universities institutionally commit to supporting and including students with mental health disabilities. Of course, every person who takes a leave of absence has his or her unique interaction with school administrators and professionals. Each interaction could be characterized by warmth, support, hostility, or indifference. For example, Dartmouth prohibits students on leave from visiting campus but notes that individual students might be exempt from this prohibition, if they receive written permission from the Dean. If a student calls the Dean's office to request this permission, we don't know if the person answering the phone is friendly, how far in advance the request has to be made, how long it takes to get permission, or if the student can visit in a dorm room or only in common spaces such as libraries and cafeterias. These things matter, and students who are brave enough to share their stories are tremendously helpful in shedding light on these aspects of the story.

The story of a graduate from Princeton University exemplifies the extent to which school professionals can be powerful agents in the lives of students, for better or for worse. The student wishes to remain anonymous, and she will be referred to as Rebecca. Rebecca had a manic

episode right before finals during her first semester at Princeton. She hadn't yet taken her finals, and when she was released from the hospital, she wasn't allowed back on campus. She received special permission to come on campus to take her finals, and the process of securing this permission made her feel "punished for having a mental illness." She also shared that during a later episode, when the school was encouraging her to take a voluntary leave, a staff member from counseling services said that she wouldn't enjoy staying at school, because her friends would be afraid of her. In this case, while her leave was technically voluntary and not involuntary, there was clear coercion and manipulation. This same student, however, had an enormously positive experience with the residential dean who approved her readmission after her second leave. She had to submit a statement summarizing what she had accomplished during her time off. She wrote that she had accomplished learning to live with bipolar disorder, and the dean was supportive and congratulatory. Individual interactions between human beings make a difference. Policies communicate institutional commitment, but professionals on the ground can have a tremendous impact.

Conclusion

The Ivy League schools are the most elite schools in our nation but they are failing when it comes to inclusion of students with mental health disabilities. These schools should find a way to support their students on campus whenever possible (i.e., by providing reasonable accommodations, and by ensuring that generalization, fear, and stereotype are not triggers for exclusion). Sometimes it will not be possible to support students on campus; students who pose a threat to others despite provision of accommodations, for example, should not be allowed to remain at school. Even in these rare cases, however, the school should make sure that when the threat is ameliorated, the student is welcomed back, and not hindered by arbitrary maximum

durations of leave, for example. The grades noted above convey that they Ivy League schools still have a lot of work to do in order to meet these ideals. Only then will they live up to their reputation of leadership.

Appendix

The scale for each indicator is as follows:

1 = Problematic

2 = Ambiguous / Room for improvement

3 = Best practice

The written policies from each school provide the basis for each grade on each indicator. Information for grading comes from policies titled leave of absence, involuntary leave of absence, withdrawal, and related links. The rubric below includes links to each relevant policy, for each school, on each indicator.

Brown: 29/ 45

	Grade	Explanation
Putting a student on leave		
1. Does the involuntary leave policy include “threat to self” language (with the premise that the inclusion of this language is facially discriminatory)?	1	The policy states: “If there is belief that the student’s safety or the safety of others is at risk, the university has the discretionary authority to place a student on medical leave.” Link to Quote
2. Do leave policies specify that the student is entitled to reasonable accommodations which would enable them to stay at school?	1	There is no language about accommodations in the mandatory leave policy.
3. Do leave policies include language against generalization, fear, or stereotype?	1	There is no language <i>against</i> generalization, fear, or stereotype.
4. Is there language about community disruption?	1	The policy states, “Guidelines governing clearance seek to assure, in consultation with the student and their medical care providers, that the student will be able to function effectively in the autonomous student environment at Brown without significant disruption to others in the University community...” Link to Quote
5. Does the policy empower students to work with mental health professionals of their choice?	3	The policy states that the Dean may connect students to resources on campus, but “for some students with established care, these consultations are unnecessary.” Link to Quote
6. Can the student initiate the process at any time?	3	The medical leave policy does not specify a deadline.
7. Are policies and procedures transparent?	3	The policy provides statistics on numbers of leaves of absences and numbers of students who meet clearance for return. There is a full discussion of the return process, including clearance criteria. Link to Return Process
The leave itself		
8. Is there a minimum length of time for the leave?	2	The policy states, “Many students choose to take two or more semesters while others return after one semester”, suggesting that if a student takes a leave in the middle of one semester, he or she might be required to remain on leave for the duration of the following semester. But, the policy states, “We encourage students to take sufficient time to address the health-related concerns that led to their leave taking. Returning too soon sometimes results in the student continuing to struggle academically and personally. Many students choose to take two or more semesters while others return after one semester. The length of the leave is intended to allow a student sufficient time away from campus to achieve sustained stability and to engage in activities that will contribute to a successful return.” Link to Quote
9. Does the school specify a maximum duration or maximum number of leaves?	1	The policy states, “Students on any kind of leave for more than five years must apply for permission to return to Brown.” There is no language about accommodation or modification here. Link to Quote
10. Does the policy identify a liaison or contact person at the school?	3	The medical leave policy states, “Deans in Student Support Services reach out to students about once each semester while away to check in and see how they are doing and if we can answer any questions.” The Deans are considered the liaison for the purpose of this indicator. Link to Quote
11. Are students on leave prohibited from visiting campus?	3	“Students who are on leave can participate in any Brown activities or meetings that would normally be open to the public or as a guest of a Brown student at events that permit guests unless being on campus poses a threat to their safety or the safety of others.” While the student is not prohibited from being on campus, the <i>threat to self</i> is problematic (and the score for indicator #1 reflects this). Link to Quote
12. Are there work or school requirements?	3	The policy states, “Medical leaves are intended to give students time to focus on their health and wellbeing so that they can return to campus and be successful in their academic and co-curricular pursuits.” The student must show stability in order to return, and “this may be shown through the general activities of the student while on leave that contribute to the student’s readiness to return to Brown.” In addition, the application to return should list other activities in which the student has engaged while on leave (for example: work, taking courses, volunteering, pursuing other interests) which may both contribute to their wellbeing and also demonstrate sustained stability and their readiness to return. Link to Quote
Returning from leave		
13. What is the deadline to apply for return?	1	October 15 th is the deadline for Spring semester clearance. May 1 st is the deadline for a Fall semester clearance (without participation in the Housing Lottery). January 15 th for Summer enrollment and/or a Fall semester clearance (with participation in the Housing Lottery) Link to Deadlines
14. Does the policy mention confidentiality, and facilitate confidentiality by specifying that medical records should be submitted to health services, not school administration?	2	The policy does not mention confidentiality but states, “Since the clinician letter is maintained as part of your medical record in CAPS and/or UHS, a limited release of information form is required in order for the Brown clinicians to participate fully in the clearance committee. Signing the release allows Brown’s clinicians to share some information included in the support letter provided to us. The form is Brown’s standard release and has been pre-completed to indicate that you give the CAPS and/or UHS staff who review your letter permission to share relevant information with the committee. This release does not apply to any information aside from the letter, and it does not give permission to share the contents of the letter.” Link to Quote
15. Does the policy facilitate student participation in university housing upon return?	1	The deadline to submit documents for clearance is much earlier if the student wants or requires participation in the housing lottery (January 15 th for Fall semester with participation; May 1 st without participation).

Columbia: 29/45

	Grade	Explanation
Putting a student on leave		
1. Does the involuntary leave policy include “threat to self” language (with the premise that the inclusion of this language is facially discriminatory)	1	The policy states, “In addition, the involuntary leave process may be initiated if, based on an individualized assessment, it is determined that there is a significant risk that the student will harm him/herself...” Link to Quote
2. Do leave policies specify that the student is entitled to reasonable accommodations which would enable them to stay at school?	3	The policy states, “In addition, the involuntary leave process may be initiated if, based on an individualized assessment, it is determined that there is a significant risk that the student will harm him/herself, and that the risk cannot be eliminated to reduced to an acceptable level through reasonable and realistic accommodations and / or on-campus supports.” Link to Quote
3. Do leave policies include language against generalization, fear, or stereotype?	1	There is no language <i>against</i> generalization, fear, or stereotype.
4. Is there language about community disruption?	3	There is no language about disruption to the community as justification for involuntary leave.
5. Does the policy empower students to work with mental health professionals of their choice?	2	“The medical or mental health professional who has been providing treatment to the student will, with the student’s written consent, confirm in writing that a Medical Leave is warranted due to the student’s health problem. Supporting medical documentation will be dated within 30 days of the request for a Medical Leave. The DOS or designee may request a consultative review of the medical or mental health documentation by a Columbia health professional. This consultation may include conversation between the treating health care provider and the designated University health professional. The DOS may also request that the student engage in an exit interview with the University health professional prior to taking the Leave. If such consultation is deemed necessary, it will not be completed without written consent from the student.” Link to Website It is unclear which party has decision-making authority.
6. Can the student initiate the process at any time?	3	In general, a Voluntary Leave Absence will be requested prior to the beginning of a semester. A student who must interrupt study temporarily because of physical or psychological illness may request a Medical Leave or Withdrawal from their DOS. Link to Website
7. Are policies and procedures transparent?	3	There is information about frequency and application of involuntary leave: “Only in extraordinary circumstances when there is compelling information to suggest that the student is engaging in or is at heightened risk of engaging in behavior that could lead to serious injury to others, including as a result of physical or psychological illness. Before an Involuntary Leave is considered, efforts may be made to encourage the student to take a Voluntary Leave of Absence.” Regarding reentry, “In an effort to gather the most current information about the student, the student may be asked to consent to a psychological and/or medical evaluation (at no cost to the student) DOS or designee will gather information necessary to make an individualized and objective assessment of the student’s ability to safely participate in his/her academic program and in the University community”. The policy also describes the Committee on Leave and considerations of this committee. Link to Quote
The leave itself		
8. Is there a minimum length of time for the leave?	1	The policy states, “Students who withdraw from their students after the eleventh week of the semester or for medical reasons are not allowed to return for at least four months (a minimum of one semester), to allow time to address the situation that led to the withdrawal.” Link to Quote
9. Does the school specify a maximum duration or maximum number of leaves?	1	The policy states, “A student who fails to request re-enrollment upon the conclusion of an involuntary leave period may be denied permission to re-enroll at a later time and may be required to apply for readmission to the school in which he/ she was enrolled.” Link to Quote
10. Does the policy identify a liaison or contact person at the school?	1	The policy does not mention a liaison or a contact person.
11. Are students on leave prohibited from visiting campus?	1	The policy states, “The student may not visit the campus or any other university-owned facility except with the written permission of the DOS.” Link to Quote
12. Are there work or school requirements?	3	The policy does not mention work or school requirements. However, students must disclose how they spent their time.
Returning from leave		
13. What is the deadline to apply for return?	3	For a medical withdrawal / leave of absence, July 15 is the deadline for a Fall return, and November 15 is the deadline for a Spring return. Link to Dates
14. Does policy mention confidentiality, and facilitate confidentiality by specifying that medical records should be submitted to health services, not school administration?	2	“Columbia University will maintain the confidentiality of all information regarding Involuntary Leaves of Absence in accordance with federal, state and local law, and to the greatest extent consistent with the goal of processing such Leaves. All records concerning Involuntary Leaves are confidential. The official copy of such records shall be retained by the Dean of the School in which the student was enrolled at the time of the Leave. Access to these records is limited by appropriate federal, state and local law.” Also, the involuntary leave policy states that the health care provider should provide a “certificate of fitness to return”, and it does not say which office on campus receives this certificate. Link to Quote
15. Does the policy facilitate participation in university housing upon return?	1	The policy states, “Students who participated in campus housing prior to their Leave are not guaranteed housing upon re-enrollment.” Link to Quote

Cornell: 28/45

	Grade	Explanation
Putting a student on leave		
1. Does the involuntary leave policy include “threat to self” language (with the premise that the inclusion of this language is facially discriminatory)	3	The policy states, "...whether the student's behavior is disruptive of the university's learning environment and whether the behavior poses a direct threat to the safety of others..." Link to Quote
2. Do leave policies specify that the student is entitled to reasonable accommodations which would enable them to stay at school?	2	The policy states, "Consideration will also be given to accommodations that may reasonably be provided that will mitigate the need for the involuntary leave." There is no mention of individualized assessment. Link to Quote
3. Do leave policies include language against generalization, fear, or stereotype?	1	There is no language <i>against</i> generalization, fear, or stereotype.
4. Is there language about community disruption?	1	The policy states, "When there is an actual or the threat of a community disruption, Cornell University may place a student on an involuntary leave of absence." Link to Quote
5. Does the policy empower students to work with mental health professionals of their choice?	1	The student must get approval to take a leave and return from Cornell Health (it can't be an outside treatment provider). Also, a Cornell Health clinician or counselor will provide "...specific treatment recommendations as part of the HLOA agreement. Compliance with the treatment expectations is a primary factor in approving a student's return to Cornell." Link to Quote
6. Can the student initiate the process at any time?	1	There are no health leaves of absence after the last day of classes.
7. Are policies and procedures transparent?	3	All decisions regarding return from an HLOA are made by an interdisciplinary committee of Cornell Health clinicians. Student requests to return are denied only when the committee is unanimous in its opinion that a return is not advisable at this time. The return process checklist also provides transparency. Also, the involuntary leave policy states that involuntary leaves are imposed only "in extraordinary circumstances." Link to Return Process Checklist , Link to Involuntary Leave Policy
The leave itself		
8. Is there a minimum length of time for the leave?	2	The policy states, "The duration of the leave is to be determined by the vice president for student and campus life based on the facts and circumstances leading up to the imposition of the involuntary leave...For health leave, amount of time will depend on the circumstances." The mental health provider report requests information, including "Once achieved, has the substantial reduction [in behaviors such as suicidal behaviors, self injury, food purging] been maintained stably for 3 consecutive months?" This may suggest that three months is the minimum duration. Link to Quote
9. Does the school specify a maximum duration or maximum number of leaves?	3	There is no language about maximum number or duration.
10. Does the policy identify a liaison or contact person at the school?	1	The policy does not identify a liaison or a contact person.
11. Are students on leave prohibited from visiting campus?	1	The policy states, "The student may visit campus only as authorized in writing by the vice president for student and campus life." The policy states, "Where appropriate, impose a persona non grata order on a student who has been placed on involuntary leave." Link to Quote
12. Are there work or school requirements?	3	The policy states, "It is expected that the student uses the time away from the University for treatment and recovery." The policy states, "Until the student complies with the pre-requisites to enrollment mandated by the vice president for student and campus life. An individualized assessment will be made for the student to determine if the pre-requisites have been satisfied." Link to Quote
Returning from leave		
13. What is the deadline to apply for return?	3	The student must notify Cornell Health in writing of their wish to return by June 1 for a Fall return and November 1 for a Spring return. Submit documentation by July 1 for fall semester return, by December 1 for spring semester return. The score is based on the documentation deadlines. Link to Dates
14. Does the policy mention confidentiality, and facilitate confidentiality by specifying that medical records should be submitted to health services, not school administration?	2	Voluntary leave policy states – "December 22, 2017: Added note at end of procedures indicating that requests for health-care related leaves should be referred to Cornell Health to initiate the HLOA process, and that academic units should not request health information or medical records directly from a student." There is no explicit mention of confidentiality. Link to Quote
15. Does the policy facilitate student participation in university housing?	1	The policy does not mention housing.

Dartmouth: 23/45

	Grade	Explanation
Putting a student on leave		
1. Does the involuntary leave policy include “threat to self” language (with the premise that the inclusion of this language is facially discriminatory)	3	There is no language about threat to self.
2. Do leave policies specify that the student is entitled to reasonable accommodations which would enable them to stay at school?	1	There is no language about accommodations.
3. Do leave policies include language against generalization, fear, or stereotype?	1	There is no language <i>against</i> generalization, fear, or stereotype.
4. Is there language about community disruption?	3	There is no language about community disruption.
5. Does the policy empower students to work with mental health professionals of their choice?	1	Students who withdraw for medical reasons must have the concurrence of the College Health Service. Also, “students who have withdrawn for medical reasons must secure the recommendation of the appropriate personnel at the College Health Service stating that they are fully capable of meeting academic responsibilities.” Link to Quote
6. Can the student initiate the process at any time?	1	The deadline for withdrawal is the last day of classes of each term. Link to Page
7. Are policies and procedures transparent?	1	Procedures not available online – “procedures on file for review at the College Health Service, Undergraduate Deans’ Office, and in the Office of the Dean of the College.” There is no language about involuntary leave only in extraordinary circumstances – it says, “under certain circumstances, the student may be placed on an involuntary medical withdrawal.” Link to Quote
The leave itself		
8. Is there a minimum length of time for the leave?	2	It is unclear. The <i>online</i> policy states, “Under certain circumstances, the student may be placed on an involuntary medical withdrawal per procedures on file for review at the College Health Service, Undergraduate Deans’ Office, and in the Office of the Dean of the College.” Link to Quote
9. Does the school specify a maximum duration or maximum number of leaves?	1	The policy states, “Students who have had four consecutive leave terms, or leave terms combined with administrative withdrawals, will be withdrawn by the Undergraduate Deans’ Office at the beginning of the next term if they still do not have an active enrollment pattern.” Readmission questionnaire asks “Why do you believe you are now ready to return to school and complete your education in an uninterrupted manner?” Link to Quote 1 , Link to Quote 2
10. Does the policy identify a liaison or contact person at the school?	1	The policy does not mention one.
11. Are students on leave prohibited from visiting campus?	1	In the case of medical withdrawal, the policy states, “Students on medical withdrawal must leave campus within 48 hours after the withdrawal has been approved, and may not return to campus before readmission without prior permission from the appropriate dean.” A withdrawal may have certain conditions associated with it, such as the requirement to remain off campus until readmission. Link to Quote
12. Are there work or school requirements?	2	Students will be asked to state: “Why and when they left Dartmouth; what they have done during their time away from the College; how they have prepared for return, both academically and otherwise; what their academic plans are upon readmission.” Link to Page
Returning from leave		
13. What is the deadline to apply for return?	2	The policy states, “Before readmission will be considered and at least 60 days prior to the beginning of the term for which readmission is being requested, students who have withdrawn for medical reasons must secure the recommendation of the appropriate personnel at the College Health Service stating that they are fully capable of meeting academic responsibilities.” Readmission questionnaire states, “This can take several weeks, so allow sufficient time to meet the readmission deadline. We strongly recommend you initiate this process with Dick’s House three months in advance of your intended readmission date.” Request for Admission states, “Please note that completed applications are due 60 days in advance of the first class day of the term in which you wish to enroll. Your readmission cannot be acted upon until Dick’s House has medically cleared you for return.” Link to Quote
14. Does the policy mention confidentiality, and facilitate confidentiality by specifying that medical records should be submitted to health services, not school administration?	2	No mention of confidentiality. Readmission materials include the appropriate “Request for Readmission” form and supplementary materials which could consist of medical clearance and/or two letters of recommendation. Materials are sent to Dick’s House, which is Dartmouth College Health Service. Link to Page
15. Does the policy facilitate student participation in university housing?	1	The policy does not mention housing.

Harvard: 28/45

	Grade	Explanation
Putting a student on leave		
1. Does the involuntary leave policy include "threat to self" language (with the premise that the inclusion of this language is facially discriminatory)	1	According to the policy, medical circumstances for involuntary leave include "self-destructive behavior"; also "the student's behavior poses a direct threat to the health or safety of any person". Link to Quote
2. Do leave policies specify that the student is entitled to reasonable accommodations which would enable them to stay at school?	3	Considerations include "whether reasonable modifications of policies, practices or procedures will mitigate the risk". There is mention of individualized assessment to identify these modifications. Link to Quote
3. Do leave policies include language against generalization, fear, or stereotype?	1	There is no language <i>against</i> generalization, fear, or stereotype.
4. Is there language about community disruption?	1	According to the policy, medical circumstances include situations in which the student's behavior "has seriously disrupted others in the student's residential community or academic environment." Link to Quote
5. Does the policy empower students to work with mental health professionals of their choice?	2	The policy states, "With respect to a voluntary leave of absence for medical reasons, the Dean of the College may consult with Harvard University Health Services (which may consider information from the student's current and/or former health care providers, if made available by the student)." Link to Quote
6. Can the student initiate the process at any time?	1	"No petitions for a leave of absence for any term will ordinarily be considered after the first day of Reading Period for that term." Link to Page
7. Are policies and procedures transparent?	3	To return from leave, "the student must petition the Administrative Board for permission to register and must demonstrate that the circumstances that led to their leave have been satisfactorily addressed and that they are ready to resume their studies." Also, "A student who wishes to take a voluntary leave of absence rather than being placed on involuntary leave of absence will ordinarily be allowed to do so." Link to Quote
The leave itself		
8. Is there a minimum length of time for the leave?	1	The policy states, "Students who petition for a leave of absence after the tenth Monday of the term ordinarily will not be allowed to register in the next academic term...Ordinarily, first-year students taking a leave of absence at any point during their first term will not be allowed to register before the fall term of the next academic year." Link to Quote
9. Does the school specify a maximum duration or maximum number of leaves?	1	The policy states, "Students who have been away from the College for five or more years must petition the Administrative Board for permission to register." Link to Quote
10. Does the policy identify a liaison or contact person at the school?	3	The policy states, "Students who have been granted a leave of absence or have been required to withdraw or placed on involuntary leave may at any time consult their Resident Dean." Link to Quote
11. Are students on leave prohibited from visiting campus?	3	There is no blanket policy, but "If so instructed by the Dean of the College or the Administrative Board, a student on leave must remain away from the University campus." Link to Quote
12. Are there work or school requirements?	2	The student must show evidence of stability, and "Evidence of stability must include a written statement describing how the student's time away has been spent and often includes a substantial period of regular employment at a non-academic job and a suitable letter of recommendation from the employer or employment supervisor." Link to Quote
Returning from leave		
13. What is the deadline to apply for return?	1	The policy states, "Students in good standing who have been granted a leave of absence may ordinarily return for any term they wish by notifying the Resident Dean twelve weeks in advance of that term." Link to Quote
14. Does the policy mention confidentiality, and facilitate confidentiality by specifying that medical records should be submitted to health services, not school administrators?	2	No mention of confidentiality. The policy states, "Students on medical leave ordinarily will be required to consult with Harvard University Health Services (and to grant permission to Harvard University Health Services to obtain their treatment records and communicate with their treatment providers) so that a professional assessment about the student's stability and readiness to return can be shared with the College, including the student's participation and progress with appropriate health care providers during their time away." Link to Quote
15. Does the policy facilitate student participation in university housing?	3	Students who are intending to return to campus can fill out a returning student housing application, presumably before they receive official permission to return. This helps to ensure that they will have access to campus housing, if in fact they are cleared to return. Link to Page

Princeton: 29/45

	Grade	Explanation
Putting a student on leave		
1. Does the involuntary leave policy include “threat to self” language (with the premise that the inclusion of this language is facially discriminatory)	1	A mandatory leave of absence may be imposed when “a student poses an actual risk to their own safety not based on mere speculation, stereotypes, or generalizations about individuals with disabilities...” Link to Quote
2. Do leave policies specify that the student is entitled to reasonable accommodations which would enable them to stay at school?	3	The policy states, “Before placing any student with a disability on a mandatory leave of absence, Princeton will do an individualized assessment to determine if there are reasonable accommodations that would permit the student to continue to participate in Princeton’s campus community without taking a leave of absence.” The individualized assessment is a best practice. Link to Quote
3. Do leave policies include language against generalization, fear, or stereotype?	3	A mandatory leave of absence may be imposed when “a student poses an actual risk to their own safety not based on mere speculation, stereotypes, or generalizations about individuals with disabilities...” Link to Quote
4. Is there language about community disruption?	3	There is no language about community disruption.
5. Does the policy empower students to work with mental health professionals of their choice?	3	For reinstatement, the policy mentions a “reinstatement consultation with University Health Services to facilitate a successful return.” The policy also states, “Careful consideration will be given to the opinion and recommendations of the student’s treating physician or mental health professional, if available.” Link to Quote
6. Can the student initiate the process at any time?	1	The deadline for withdrawing from a semester in progress is dean’s date. Link to Page
7. Are policies and procedures transparent?	3	The policy states that students can choose to take a voluntary leave of absence instead of being placed on mandatory leave. There is no information on the frequency of mandatory leave, or the percentage of students who are reinstated. It also states, “If the leave is health-related, any conditions or requirements for reinstatement will be based on an individualized assessment of each student ...” Link to Quote
The leave itself		
8. Is there a minimum length of time for the leave?	1	The policy states, “A standard leave of absence would commence following the successful completion of a semester, and would typically last for two semesters, due to the sequential nature of Princeton’s curriculum and the structure of independent work. If a student has completed at least one year of study and if they have formally joined an academic department, it is possible to petition for a one-semester leave of absence.” Link to Quote
9. Does the school specify a maximum duration or maximum number of leaves?	1	The policy states, “A student who has taken three leaves from the University, including any academic required withdrawal or mandatory leave of absence, or who has taken a leave of absence in excess of three years, may no longer be eligible for the regular reinstatement process.” Link to Quote
10. Does the policy identify a liaison or contact person at the school?	1	The leave of absence policies do not identify a liaison or contact person.
11. Are students on leave prohibited from visiting campus?	2	There is no prohibition in the policy, nor does it state that students are generally allowed to visit campus, unless safety is a concern.
12. Are there work or school requirements?	2	There are no requirements listed in under mandatory leave of absence. The general leave of absence policy states, “In some cases the dean of the college or the dean of undergraduate students may establish specific requirements for reinstatement if the circumstances of the student’s departure warrant it. The goal of such conditions is to prepare the student for a successful return to the University; for example, a student may be asked to complete pre-approved coursework at an outside institution in order to demonstrate readiness to return to rigorous academic work or to participate in a reinstatement consultation with University Health Services to facilitate a successful return.” Link to Quote
Returning from leave		
13. What is the deadline to apply for return?	2	The policy states, “Students eligible for reinstatement can expect to receive instructions for completing the online reinstatement forms from their residential college dean. The process begins in March for the fall term and in November for the spring term.” Link to Quote
14. Does policy mention confidentiality, and facilitate confidentiality by specifying that medical records should be submitted to health services, not school administration?	2	There is no mention of confidentiality. The policy mentions a “reinstatement consultation with University Health Services”, so the grade reflects the assumption that records are received by UHS and not the school administration. Link to Quote
15. Does the policy facilitate student participation in university housing?	1	There is no mention of housing in the policy.

University of Pennsylvania: 31/45

	Grade	Explanation
Putting a student on leave		
1. Does the involuntary leave policy include “threat to self” language (with the premise that the inclusion of this language is facially discriminatory)	1	“Threat to self” language is included in the policy as a justification for involuntary leave. The policy states, “students whose psychiatric, psychological, or other medical condition causes them to pose a threat to themselves or others, or causes them to significantly disrupt the educational and other activities of the University community, may be required to take a leave of absence from the University.” Link to Quote
2. Do leave policies specify that the student is entitled to reasonable accommodations which would enable them to stay at school?	1	There is no language about accommodations. The University may decide that that the student can remain enrolled subject to conditions (including a description of those conditions) – this may be due to accommodations, but does not facially say so. Link to Page
3. Do leave policies include language against generalization, fear, or stereotype?	1	There is no language <i>against</i> generalization, fear, or stereotype.
4. Is there language about community disruption?	1	The policy states that involuntary leave can be imposed when the student “threatens, harms, or has the potential to harm the health or safety of the student or others; causes or threatens to cause significant property damage; or significantly disrupts the educational and other activities of the University community”. The policy states, “the University may determine that the student’s health and welfare, and/or the needs of the community, require a period of involuntary leave of absence.” Link to Quote
5. Does the policy empower students to work with mental health professionals of their choice?	1	The policy does not mention university health services or the student’s own provider. However, “the College will outline any specific conditions that must be met by the student before returning from leave.” Also, when a student applies to return from a leave, “The College, in consultation with these offices (Counseling and Psychological Services and / or Student Health Service) will determine whether the results of the evaluation suffice to satisfy the conditions set forth in the original message granting approval for the leave.” Link to Quote
6. Can the student initiate the process at any time?	2	“Students are encouraged to request a leave of absence before the beginning of the semester in question. Leaves requested after the beginning may be denied...” Highly discouraged. Link to Quote
7. Are policies and procedures transparent?	3	The policy states, “Approximately five percent of each graduating class spends at least one semester on leave from Penn during their undergraduate studies and more than three quarters of students who take a leave return within two years to complete their degree.” Also, “Students whose leave request indicated medical circumstances as at least part of the reason for that request will be required to present a treating clinician’s current evaluation of the medical condition to the relevant health office (Counseling and Psychological Services and/or Student Health Service). The College, in consultation with these offices, will determine whether the results of the evaluation suffice to satisfy the conditions set forth in the original message granting approval for the leave.” Link to Quote 1 , Link to Quote 2
The leave itself		
8. Is there a minimum length of time for the leave?	1	The policy states, “The standard length of a College leave of absence is one full calendar year. Students may request an early return from leave after one full semester on leave, but should bear in mind that this request may be denied.” Also, “Students typically take a leave for a full academic year. Individual circumstances may require more or less time; the length of the leave is determined by the school.” Link to Quote 1 , Link to Quote 2
9. Does the school specify a maximum duration or maximum number of leaves?	3	There is no maximum duration or maximum number of leaves specified in the policy.
10. Does the policy identify a liaison or contact person at the school?	3	The policy states, “Students on leave should remain in contact with their advisor and updated them about changes in plans.” Link to Quote
11. Are students on leave prohibited from visiting campus?	3	There is no prohibition from visiting campus. It is inferred that they are allowed to visit campus, because the policy specifies, “Students on leave may not live in University-owned housing during the term of their leave or participate in and/or hold a leadership position in a registered University organization”. Link to Quote
12. Are there work or school requirements?	3	The policy states, “All conditions for return as specified in the original notification letter must be satisfied...” Link to Quote
Returning from leave		
13. What is the deadline to apply for return?	3	Involuntary leave policy states “Such a request [to return from leave] must be submitted no less than 30 days before the beginning of the semester in which the student seeks to reenroll. The Return from Leave form must be received by the College Office by: July 15 for Fall enrollment, November 15 for Spring enrollment.” Voluntary leave policy states, “all conditions for return as specified in the original notification letter must be satisfied before August 1 for a fall return, December 1 for a spring return and May 1 for a summer return. Students who have not satisfied all conditions may be denied return.” Link to Quote 1 , Link to Quote 2
14. Does the policy mention confidentiality, and facilitate confidentiality by specifying that medical records should be submitted to health services, not school administration?	3	“All records concerning involuntary leaves of absence will be kept in accordance with the University confidentiality policy and other applicable policies.” Also, “Students whose leave request indicated medical circumstances as at least part of the reason for that request will be required to present a treating clinician’s current evaluation of the medical condition to the relevant health office (Counseling and Psychological Services and/or Student Health Service).” Link to Quote 1 , Link to Quote 2
15. Does the policy facilitate student participation in university housing?	2	The policy directs students to contact Housing Services once their request for return has been approved. There is no information about whether the timeline for approval will impact their ability to secure housing. Link to Page

Yale: 24/45

	Grade	Explanation
Putting a student on leave		
1. Does the involuntary leave policy include “threat to self” language (with the premise that the inclusion of this language is facially discriminatory)	1	The school can impose required medical withdrawal when “the Dean of Yale College determines that the student is a danger to self or others because of a serious medical problem.” Link to Quote
2. Do leave policies specify that the student is entitled to reasonable accommodations which would enable them to stay at school?	1	There is no language about accommodations.
3. Do leave policies include language against generalization, fear, or stereotype?	1	There is no language <i>against</i> generalization, fear, or stereotype.
4. Is there language about community disruption?	3	There is no language about community disruption.
5. Does the policy empower students to work with mental health professionals of their choice?	2	The policy states, “A withdrawal for medical reasons must be authorized by the director of Yale Health or the chief of the Mental Health and Counseling department, or by their official designees within the Health Center. If a student under the care of a non-Yale Health physician wishes to withdraw for medical reasons, that physician should submit sufficient medical history to the director of Yale Health for a final decision on the recommendation.” Link to Quote
6. Can the student initiate the process at any time?	2	There are deadlines for a leave; otherwise the student must withdraw. Link to Page
7. Are policies and procedures transparent?	1	There is minimal information about the process for return – “the Yale College Dean’s Office may require medical clearance from Yale Health before the student’s return.” It does not provide criteria for medical clearance but does mention that it cannot be provided “in the absence of documentation provided to Yale Health that the student has had successful treatment from an appropriate health clinician.” It also says that “Yale College reserves the right to require a student to withdraw for medical reasons...” and does not include language that this is rare or in extraordinary circumstances. Link to Quote
The leave itself		
8. Is there a minimum length of time for the leave?	1	The policy states, “Students whose withdrawal was for either academic reasons or personal reasons must remain away for at least one fall term and one spring term, in either order, not including the term in which the withdrawal occurred.... Students whose withdrawal had been authorized as medical by the director of Yale Health or the chief of the Mental Health and Counseling department must normally remain away at least one full term before a return to Yale College, not including the term in which the withdrawal occurred.” Link to Quote
9. Does the school specify a maximum duration or maximum number of leaves?	3	The policy states for leaves requested in advance of the semester, “A student is eligible for a total of two terms of leave of absence. These two terms need not be taken consecutively.” The policy states, “A student is eligible to be reinstated only once; a second reinstatement may be considered only under unusual circumstances, usually of a medical nature.” The policy also states, that they “seeks to reinstate only those students who ... complete degree requirements within the specific number of terms of enrollment remaining to them, the committee may sometimes advise an applicant to defer his or her return until a time later than the one originally proposed.” Link to Quote
10. Does the policy identify a liaison or contact person at the school?	1	The leave of absence policy does not mention a liaison or contact person.
11. Are students on leave prohibited from visiting campus?	1	The policy states, “Withdrawn students may not stay in residences on campus, attend classes, participate in organized extracurricular activities, or make use of University libraries as well as athletic and other facilities. They may come to campus only upon receiving prior permission from their residential college dean or the Dean of Student Affairs.” Link to Quote
12. Are there work or school requirements?	1	The policy states, “During the time that a student who has withdrawn is away from Yale College, the Committee on Reinstatement expects him or her to have been constructively occupied and to have maintained a satisfactory standard of conduct.... a record of course work is also required of students who withdrew for medical reasons.” “In order to demonstrate that upon return they can satisfactorily complete their academic program,” “students who withdrew while a term was in progress or who were dismissed for academic reasons... must ordinarily complete the equivalent of at least two term courses, ... earning grades of A or B. ... Excluding courses conducted online.” Link to Quote
Returning from leave		
13. What is the deadline to apply for return?	3	The policy states, “For reinstatement to a fall term, applications must be submitted in person or by receipted mail by June 1. For reinstatement to a spring term, applications must be submitted in person or by receipted mail by November 1. These deadlines are strictly enforced.” Link to Quote
14. Does the policy mention confidentiality, and facilitate confidentiality by specifying that medical records should be submitted to health services, not school administration?	2	Confidentiality is not explicitly mentioned, but documentation is provided to Yale Health (not the administration). The policy states, “As an integral part of the application for reinstatement, students who withdrew for medical reasons must obtain a recommendation from Yale Health. Such a recommendation must come from either the director of Yale Health or the chief of the Mental Health and Counseling department, or from their official designees within the Health Center; no such recommendation can be made in the absence of documentation provided to Yale Health that the student has had successful treatment from an appropriate health clinician.” The letter of documenting “successful treatment” is not necessarily more than a letter of recommendation. Link to Quote
15. Does the policy facilitate participation in university housing?	1	The policy does not mention housing.

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