

# Guiding Your Student to Independence: BGSU Staff and Families Working Together



## Preparing for a Larger World

College is a time of significant transition for young adults. Our goal in the Office of Residence Life is to support this process as our residents mature from child to adult.

We believe students can make good decisions. Our residents bring a wide range of values and beliefs from family and friends who make our residential community the diverse and vibrant culture it is. We depend on parents and families to offer clear guidance and hold expectations that their students will act as independent adults.

You do not lose a child when you help them move into their new surroundings. You gain a partner in supporting their development. Help us help you and your student.

## Help Us Help You and Your Student

Students go through a variety of developmental stages during their first year of college. The most crucial one is moving from "dependence to independence." Students who have depended on families to define boundaries are now on their own. They vacillate between happily making decisions and being fearful. One day they ask for assistance and the next day they resent their families for interfering. Defining boundaries entails risk plus trial and error.

## Staying Informed

As students transition from children to adults, how do you keep abreast of what is going on in their lives, especially if they aren't very communicative? It is common for parents and families to inquire about their student's well-being.

## Before you Contact University Staff Members, consider the following:

**Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)** When students take on the legal status of "adult," FERPA governs how BGSU handles student records. This federal law does not allow us to share any part of a student's record with anyone without the student's written consent. This includes student conduct records, academic records and any records pertaining to student housing. The only exception is in an emergency.

Being denied access can be difficult to comprehend, particularly for families who pay for their student's education.

It is important for your student to be the primary source of information that you receive. Encourage them to communicate openly and honestly with you about issues involving their education. This is a critical skill to develop and helps build trust and respect between families and students.

## Emotional Support

College can be frustrating. For many, it is a time of confusing relationships, redefined friendships and transition. Many struggle at first.

Students have a tendency to call parents and families when they are having an emotionally difficult day. Many choose to share positive experiences with their friends and a higher proportion of the negative experiences with their families.

You can provide a listening ear for negative and positive experiences by making a point to ask about the good things that are happening as well. Students need to be reminded about the positive aspects of their college experience to build upon these experiences.

## Room for Mistakes

Students will make mistakes as they negotiate what it means to be an adult. Some mistakes are more detrimental than others and many will be important life lessons.

The natural inclination is to correct students when they head towards unwise decisions. Although this is understandable, the end result may be that students do not learn how to make decisions independently.

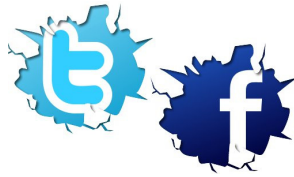
We ask that families discuss the options and allow room for students to make their own decisions. By making the wrong choice and dealing with the consequences, students learn to make better choices in the future.

Students will practice, and ultimately learn to define their boundaries, and take responsibility for their actions. The number of options and opportunities seem limitless and students are forced to choose between right and wrong decisions.

Use the BGSU Student Handbook as a helpful resource found at: [bgsu.edu/StudentHandbook](http://bgsu.edu/StudentHandbook)

### Contact Us

[bgsu.edu/ResLife](http://bgsu.edu/ResLife)  
419-372-2011  
[reslife@bgsu.edu](mailto:reslife@bgsu.edu)



**Twitter, Facebook & Instagram** @BGSUResLife

**Resident Advisors** are a great resource for students.

**Hall Directors** are best equipped to help families. You should reach out to the Hall Director if you have questions or concerns.

## Student Responsibilities

### Alcohol and Other Drugs

Alcohol is not allowed in the residence halls for students under 21 and illegal drugs are not allowed under any circumstances. Many students believe alcohol use is a part of the college experience and some will experiment with drug use.

**Families are crucial in helping students make good decisions about the use of these substances.** Often students engage in these behaviors because they believe it is expected and that "everyone is doing it". There is a large number of students who choose not to use alcohol and drugs.

**Families can encourage students to find a social group who make wise choices.** Peer pressure is usually associated with negative behavior, however, peer pressure can also work on positive behavior. Peers can reinforce responsible attitudes towards alcohol and other drugs.



President Rogers visits student and family at Move-in.

## Conduct Process

Students sometimes find it difficult to abide by the policies of living in a residence hall community. **Families can help students understand their choices and responsibilities as residents.** All policies are located in the BGSU Student Code of Conduct.

Unfortunately, students who violate residence hall policies will find themselves in our Student Conduct Process. The goal of this process is to educate students about our expectations of them as BGSU students and the impact of their actions on their community.

Most students meet with a Hall Director, understand the expectations and are never in violation again. There are some, however, who repeatedly violate policies and require a stronger response.

**Families can assist by encouraging students to be responsible and responsive when engaged in a student behavior meeting.**

Some students make the conduct process difficult because they either ignore letters from the Office of Residence Life, or the Office of the Dean of Students, or don't understand how serious the sanctions are. Encourage your student to deal with these issues quickly and directly.

## Your Student's Well Being

### Safety

Your student's safety is our number one priority and we do our best to protect students from harm. The most effective way is to give them the skills to protect themselves.

Because students feel safe and "at home" in our campus communities, they sometimes make ill-advised decisions such as leaving their room doors unlocked, propping open exterior building doors and walking alone on campus late at night. These actions are unsafe.

It is critical that students keep their keys with them at all times (even when going to the community bathroom). This is a vital step in assuring personal safety.

BGSU provides a 24-hour security escort service for students going to all parts of campus. We highly encourage students to use this service or walk in groups. Students can request an escort by calling the University Escort Service at 419-372-8360.

## Wellness

Students generally transition from a structured lifestyle at home to an unstructured lifestyle at college. They create their own lifestyle for the first time, setting their schedules for sleep and exercise, and making decisions about diet. Developing consistent sleeping and eating patterns is the key to wellness.

Setting personal boundaries is another component of wellness. Students sometimes have difficulty in a residence hall community because there are always activities available that are more fun than studying, sleeping or exercising.



Students move into their home-away-from-home.

**Families can remind students of the reasons they are in college and what they aspire to accomplish.** Helping students make choices that provide an enriching and fun experience, as well as a healthy and productive one, is something a family member is uniquely qualified to do.

## Academic Concerns

Many students find high school easy and they acquire the knowledge to excel through homework and regular quizzing.

College often proves more difficult than expected. Students are surprised by the increased academic requirements and shocked when their grades drop. There is less official structure to the academic rigor. Homework is rarely assigned and students are often given a syllabus to follow for the semester.

**Families can help by encouraging students to create study schedules and adhere to them.** This can go a long way towards supporting your student's academic success.

## Financial Concerns

Many students have not had the opportunity to oversee their own financial well-being and their budgets can spiral out of control. Credit card companies provide a surprisingly large credit line to students who can "max out" their credit cards immediately.

**Families can help by discussing the basics of financial matters with their student.** This includes how to balance a checkbook and how credit cards operate, a vital part of protecting your student.

## Transitions: An Evolving Relationship

Many students and families are surprised by the substantial change in their relationship. It is a difficult process of redefining roles and expectations.

## Trust

Issues of trust often come up. Families who have been involved in their children's lives are no longer involved on a daily basis. Families wonder what the student is doing when they haven't heard from them. In addition to safety concerns, they worry about choices being made in other areas.

Our experience indicates that students occasionally make un-wise choices, but most maintain their value systems and the skills necessary to make smart decisions.

## Creating Identity

One of the most complicated processes students experience is "establishing identity." During the first year of college, students are in the process of defining who they are and separating from their families. Many go through a process of "trying out" several new identities.

Students appear different when they come home for the first time after being away at college. They may change their appearance (hair color, body piercing, tattoos, etc.) or the way they walk. This is normal behavior.

Students may explore different spiritual traditions or parts of their personality that they have kept hidden from parents, family and close friends.

Rest assured that your student is still the same person foundationally. This identity process is important in their development and is how they figure out what works for them. Eventually, students settle into an identity that is uniquely their own.

## Healthy Distance

Due to advances in communication technology, students and families stay in touch on a daily basis. This is different than in previous years, when a phone call once a week and the occasional letter or package from home was all the contact students had with their families.

New technologies make it easy to remain close, but have had a negative effect on some aspects of student development. Students, who maintain constant contact with family and friends from home, often do not fully engage in the college experience.

Cell phones, email and social media can be a “crutch” for students who are not comfortable in their new environment by filling their time with people from home and avoid the difficult task of making new friends and establishing relationships.

Families can help by maintaining a “healthy distance” and encouraging students to utilize the resources and people at BGSU for interaction and solutions.

Effectively guiding your student to independence will be very rewarding!

## Residence Life and Campus Events

Campus is packed with events during the first weeks of school. Here are just a few your student will be participating in:

### Thursday, Aug. 23 | First Floor Meeting

7:15 – 8:30 p.m., Times & Locations Vary (Students ask RA)

### Friday, Aug. 24 | Get with the Program (Mandatory)

10:30 a.m. to Noon, Various times & locations. Students check email or see OWGL for more info.

### Friday, Aug. 24 | First Class (Mandatory)

2:30 p.m. – 5 p.m., Various Classrooms

### Saturday, Aug. 25 | Living in a Community: Your New Home

5:15 – 8:15 p.m., Times & Locations Vary by Hall (Students should ask RA if they have questions)

### Saturday, Aug. 25 | It's Ice to Meet You

9 – 11 p.m., McDonald Hall - Mac Beach

### Tuesday, Aug. 28 | Campus Fest

11 – 3 p.m., BTSU Oval

### Thursday, Aug. 31 | RSA Casino Night

8 – 11 p.m., BTSU Ballroom

### Saturday, Sept. 1 | Marvel's Avengers: Infinity War

9 – 11:45 p.m., Centennial Hall Courtyard

### Sept. 14 – 16 | Falcon Family Weekend

[bgsu.edu/FamilyWeekend](https://bgsu.edu/FamilyWeekend)

## Guide App

The Guide App is new at BGSU this year. Every student should download the this mobile app and check it frequently. The app will help keep track of important steps and events coming up at BGSU. Students can set academic goals and get connected to critical services. They can discover extra-curricular activities for a more rounded experience. If your student hasn't downloaded the BGSU Guide App, there's no time like the present. Here's how: 1) go to the app store, 2) search for Guide-college simplified, 3) open app and select BGSU as you school, and 4) login with your BGSU credentials.

## BGSU Parent and Family Resources

The following are resources to help you as a parent. The list is not all inclusive and other resources may be available.

### Office of Residence Life Family Page

[bgsu.edu/reslifeFamily](https://bgsu.edu/reslifeFamily)

A helpful resource for parents with residential students.

Covers housing policies, offices, care packages, etc.

### BGSU Parents and Families Programs

[bgsu.edu/FamilyPrograms](https://bgsu.edu/FamilyPrograms)

A helpful resources for all parents and families with students at BGSU. They have a great Facebook group and communicate regularly with parents about important information at BGSU.



A student checks in at Offenhauer Towers.

## Plan a Trip to BGSU

Whether its Homecoming, Family Weekend or Sibs & Kids Weekend, there is no doubt that at some point you will decide to make a trip to Bowling Green. The Office of Parent and Family Programs has a great website with tips and suggestions for planning your trip.

[bgsu.edu/VisitBG](https://bgsu.edu/VisitBG)

## Bowling Green Local Retailers

**Meijer** | 2111 E Wooster Street

**Wal-Mart** | 131 W Gypsy Lane Road

**Home Depot** | 1169 S Main Street

**Staples** | 1135 S Main Street #215

**Best Western Falcon Plaza** | 1450 E Wooster Street

**Hampton Inn Bowling Green** | 142 Campbell Hill Road

**Holiday Inn Express & Suites** | 2150 E Wooster Street