

July, 2011 Letter to Cornell Families

Insure
Your Health

Dear parents and guardians,

As the mother of three (one of whom graduated from college in May), I have experienced many of the emotions you may be feeling as your student prepares for the next step as a Cornell student. Excitement, worry, trepidation, pride: they come at every stage of the college experience. Parents of new students will glimpse the beginnings of great personal, social, and intellectual unfolding in their children. Parents of returning students will marvel at the ongoing evolution, and receive even more practice in the challenging process of letting go.

It's not always easy. It's not easy to entrust our children's care to others. It's not easy to be confident they will know when, where and how to reach out for help. Let me assure you that my colleagues and I at Gannett Health Services are invested in your student's well-being. We chose to specialize in college student health because we genuinely enjoy college students and believe that good health will maximize their quality of life and academic success. We provide high quality, integrated medical, mental health, and health promotion services geared to the needs of young adults who are discovering new independence and responsibility, while living close together in an intense learning environment.

Gannett serves as the primary care provider for students when they are in Ithaca. We want your student's experience of seeking health care to be as easy as possible. We work hard to be "user-friendly." Still, it is your support that will make all the difference in helping your student get appropriate insurance coverage, and confidently come to us for services or advice.

Selecting an effective health insurance plan is one of the most important ways you can support your student's well-being. We encourage students and their families to become "informed consumers" of health care with knowledge and understanding of how their health insurance works. Take a moment to read this year's "Choosing Health Insurance" fact sheet. Although U.S. family health insurance plans now are required to offer coverage for children up to the age of 26, many do not provide adequate coverage for students who are away from home and "out of area." Others have high deductibles or "out of pocket" costs that make students hesitate to seek needed care.

Make sure you understand any plan you are considering. What will it cover and how will it work at Cornell, in Ithaca, and at other destinations your student travels to for study, work, or recreation? Will it facilitate timely and confidential access to affordable health care? How does it compare to Cornell's Student Health Insurance Plan (SHIP)? The SHIP is broadly recognized as a model student health insurance program, one that provides outstanding coverage well-matched to the services provided on campus and in the Ithaca area, and the varied needs of mobile Cornell students.

Parents also have a very important role in helping students make decisions about protecting their health and seeking health care. In a recent survey, students confirmed what we guessed: they want to be able to turn to their parents *first* to talk about a health-related concern. We also observe them in sensitive situations in which they don't want to worry their parent or risk your disapproval, or where they just want to handle something on their own. We encourage you to open the door to conversations about stress, relationships, alcohol and drugs, emotional well-being, and concerns for others.



If your student has an ongoing physical or mental health problem, talk about the importance of making a connection with a health care provider before an urgent need arises. Students often put off seeking care for a "small" problem and then end up missing classes, work, and other important activities. Please join us in helping them learn how to make effective and timely use of the many health resources available to them.

Finally, please understand that, while we encourage our patients to involve their families in health matters, privacy laws require that we have their consent to talk with you about *anything* related to their health care (including bills). However, confidentiality does not limit what *you* can say to us, so please do not hesitate to call to share the observations and concerns of a parent or get general information about our services.

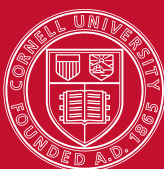
Throughout the year, the Gannett and Office of Student Health Insurance websites will highlight many important health issues and resources. We hope the information they provide will help us partner effectively in supporting your son or daughter through this incredible, if challenging, period of growth.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Janet Corson-Rikert". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Janet Corson-Rikert, MD

Assistant Vice President for Campus Health
Executive Director of Gannett Health Services



Cornell University
Gannett Health Services

For more information
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