

Away At College: A Student's Health Care

Every year as universities reopen, attorneys receive panicked calls from parents whose children are away at school with health problems. A freshman breaks his jaw in an intramural football game. A sophomore crashed her bike into a cement post on the side of the road. A junior swam under a pod of jellyfish that stung his back and sides: A dozen stories in every law office show how parents often learn what health forms they need after the jaw breaks or the jelly fish stings.

Sometimes the calls come from a panicked parent begging for a way to coax a caregiver into giving a child treatment without the necessary documents to proceed with the student's care. Fortunately, these calls are avoidable with minimum planning before disaster strikes.

Besides vitamins and a first aid kit, young scholars over the age of 18 should also have a simple packet of papers for their healthcare before they leave for school. This applies to graduate students and professional schools as much as it applies to college.

Healthcare Directives, HIPAA forms and CMIA forms allow parents to

make decisions for their kids over the age of 18 (21 in some states) if the kids are not able to communicate with the treating physician. While there are means for doctors to proceed without executed forms, the process and the time required are often a dangerous waste of time when a child is waiting for treatment. When a family member is ill or injured, having a Health Care Directive and a HIPAA form on hand can create a faster path to a diagnosis and treatment.

Relatives or friends who live near the college are good candidates to have the forms executed in their names until mom and dad can get to campus; of course parents of children going out of state should ask their family counsel to check whether that state has requirements for healthcare documents which differ from California.

Finally, it's a good idea to coordinate your family health forms with the university's infirmary forms, especially those which cover your child's special health concerns. The best healthcare forms are always the ones which the medical center receives in advance.



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