



Sustaining an Active Minds Chapter at Your Community College

A GUIDE FOR STUDENTS & ADVISORS

Having an Active Minds chapter on your campus can be a transformative way to make a positive impact on the culture and climate around mental health at your community college. Informed by Active Minds leaders from community colleges around the country, this guide outlines the benefits of having Active Minds on your campus and provides practical steps to establish and sustain a thriving, student-led chapter tailored to the unique needs of a community college.



Benefits of Active Minds at a Community College



Fosters a Community among Students

"Honestly, it's just I wanted a sense of community. I really wanted to just meet some people and get to know them and have friends... Because I was a new student...so I just thought, OK, I know I'm going to the nursing program. It's going to be so stressful. I want to have a group of people that can support me and that I can support them too."

- Frida Gonzalez (Student Leader)



Creates Mental Health Champions

"I have hope that through my work with students involved in Active Minds, they'll become little agents of change as they leave. They'll go on to become credentialed and get into positions of greater power. I trust they'll influence policy and organizational culture to support mental health across many sectors of industry."

- Ross Artwohl (Chapter Advisor)



Five Key Components

***For sustaining a successful Active Minds Chapter
at a Community College***



Make Your Chapter Accessible

Community colleges play a critical role in higher education by providing accessible options for students seeking a variety of educational pathways, allowing them to pursue their academic aspirations at their own pace while maintaining commitments beyond academia (Loyd, 2023). In order to recruit and retain members, Active Minds chapters should seek to embrace the same flexibility the community college environment offers to students while honoring the other priorities students have on and off campus.



Hybrid Approach

To enhance accessibility, offer both in-person and virtual events via platforms like Zoom. This accommodates various preferences and ensures wider participation. In addition, make sure all meeting announcements are reported out via email, on group messaging platforms, through specific channels or platforms unique to your college or posted on social media.

Event Calendar

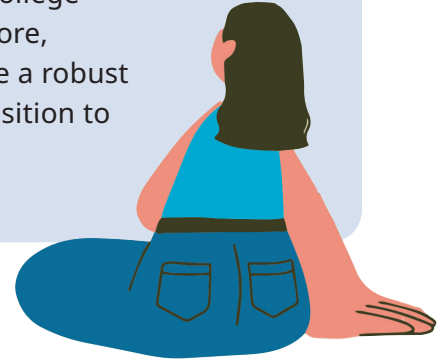
Develop a comprehensive event calendar well in advance, allowing students to work Active Minds meetings and events into their semester schedules alongside academic and personal commitments.

Consistency

Host regular meetings and events with a consistent schedule will promote engagement and participation on a regular basis while respecting student's schedules.

Establish Ongoing Systems for Chapter Leadership

The timeframe of most students' career at a community college results in frequent turnover in chapter leadership. Therefore, Active Minds chapters at Community Colleges must create a robust and thorough system for leadership recruitment and transition to accommodate this timeline.



Co-Leadership

Encourage collaboration between leaders by pairing them up for event planning and delivery. This promotes shared responsibility, teamwork and diverse perspectives. Staff or faculty advisors can do the same by collaborating with an advisor from a different campus office or department to navigate organizational policies and regulations effectively.

Strategic Leadership Transitions

Plan leadership transitions well in advance to ensure continuity of the chapter. Incoming leaders can gradually assume responsibilities to facilitate a seamless shift in chapter management. Consider allowing incoming leaders to shadow current leaders, setting up a time for asking questions, and introducing new leaders to key partners of your chapter.

Documentation

Maintain a leadership binder or digital folder detailing past events, costs, promotion strategies, contact information of key partners, and more. This resource will guide future leaders and members, allowing them to build off of what has already been established and inspire new ideas.

Member Engagement

Encourage members to lead meetings and propose project ideas they are passionate about. This involvement enhances engagement and fosters a sense of leadership among general members, empowering them to take on larger roles in the organization.

Foster an Inclusive Culture

Community colleges often cater to diverse groups such as adult learners, high school students earning advanced credit, part-time learners, parents, first-generation students and those from varied socioeconomic backgrounds (Loyd, 2023). Many of these students can also come from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds, and Active Minds chapters should integrate cultural diversity into mental health education and advocacy in order to support their unique student body.

Embrace Member Diversity

Embrace the diverse backgrounds of members by celebrating and honoring days of celebration and remembrance, like Dia de los Muertos, Ramadan, and Holi. Acknowledge and respect the identities of members such as disability, physical or mental, age, gender identity, and parental roles. Tailoring meetings and events that highlight, honor, and celebrate specific student identities is an important part of understanding the ways to support the mental health of young adults on your campus and in your community.

Host Diverse Speakers

Host speakers from different cultural backgrounds who can share about their mental health experiences. This can include local speakers from the community, students, faculty or staff at the college or a [speaker from Active Minds](#). These personal stories have the power to reduce stigma, encourage help-seeking behaviors, and create an inspiring and educational experience among different cultures, backgrounds and identities.

Need funding to bring a speaker to campus? Check out the [Active Minds Program Fund](#).

Utilize Diversity Equity and Inclusion Resources

Utilize resources from Active Minds, such as the [CALM Microaggression Repair Toolkit](#), to address microaggressions and promote understanding among a diverse group of students. Equip the chapter with these tools to foster a healthy group dynamic and help students gain experience in successfully working with different types of people.

Initiate Strategic Partnerships

With Community College campus' focus being on benefiting the community at large by educating and providing resources to local students (Loyd, 2023), Active Minds could be seen as an asset to these priorities by aligning itself with community organizations and academic departments and bringing mental health advocacy into these spaces.

Engage Faculty

Partner with faculty to integrate Active Minds events into coursework, both inside or outside of class, or ask faculty to offer extra credit for attending an Active Minds event. Invite faculty to share their expertise with the chapter if they could speak on a mental health-related topic.

Collaborate with Academic Partners

Collaborate with academic departments and honor societies to bridge mental health discussions with students' academic pursuits. To appeal to these audiences, provide information on how mental health is relevant to the field or area of study of the department you are wanting to partner with.

Partner with Other Student Groups

Forge partnerships with other campus programs and student organizations. Specially, consider reaching out to organizations focused on specific groups of students like international students, LGBTQ+ students, veterans and other diversity clubs. Collaborate on panel discussions, events, workshops, and activities to foster alliances with students across campus to increase understanding of mental health across communities, involvement, and event attendance. This peer-to-peer approach to ensuring that mental health is valued and prioritized for all communities is key to Active Minds programming.



Promote Active Minds as a Student-Led Resource

Many community college students are enrolled as part time learners, meaning their time is being spent in places beyond campus and community colleges may have limited resources and staff support compared to larger institutions (Sontag-Padilla, 2023). Presenting Active Minds as a valuable campus resource may be appealing to students as they choose how to spend their time and also aid administration's efforts to enhance mental health support on campus.

Frame as a Campus Resource

Promote your Active Minds chapter as a valuable resource for students seeking mental health education, a welcoming community who will be understanding of life struggles and support resilience, and an opportunity for students to learn how to be mental health advocates.

Promote Widely

Advertise events through the student activities portal, campus office social media pages, course syllabi and professor announcements on school-wide learning platforms where students already are spending their time. Aligning Active Minds with academic-focused resources can also decrease the stigma associated with mental health support and show the level of importance the campus places on mental health.

Raise Awareness

Use your chapter's influence to raise awareness of mental health resources available on and off campus, including both campus counseling and health resources along with community mental health organizations and resources. Invite representatives from these spaces to speak at meetings and attend Active Minds events.



Next Steps



1

Starting a Chapter

Don't have a chapter on your campus yet? To start one you will need the following:

- At least three students and one advisor (teacher, professor, counselor, or other school staff member).
- Complete your school's process for starting a student organization and provide documentation of approval.
- Complete Active Minds Chapter Registration Form found on our website, <https://www.activeminds.org/programs/chapter-network>

2

Maintaining Your Chapter

Once you have started your chapter or if you already have one, make sure to routinely do the following:

- Keep the Active Minds Chapters Team at the national office up-to-date on current contact information for Chapter Presidents, Leaders, Advisors, and Members.
- Complete all Chapter Reports (typically sent out to chapters quarterly) to let us know what your chapter has been up to.

3

Communicating with the Active Minds National Office

- If you have any questions, please feel free to contact our Chapters Team at chapters@activeminds.org.
- Follow Active Minds on social media: @active_minds (Instagram, TikTok) or @activemindsinc (Facebook, Snapchat).
- Visit us online at [activeminds.org](https://www.activeminds.org).



Sources

American College Health Association. (Spring 2022). American College Health Association-National College Health Assessment III: Undergraduate Student Reference Group Executive Summary Spring 2022. Silver Spring, MD: American College Health Association.

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To learn more, visit: www.activeminds.org