

The COVID-19 pandemic has put the spotlight on preexisting conditions, which makes Gen Z more conscious than previous generations of the need for preventive healthcare. An American Heart Association and American Diabetes Association survey conducted by One Poll found Gen Z to be more concerned about their health than any other generation. In that same survey, three-quarters of U.S. adults 18 to 23 admitted to worrying that ill health would impinge on their life experiences, compared to only 63% of Baby Boomers 56 and older.

Mental health concerns have also increased. Significant evidence indicates that the COVID-19 pandemic and the forced isolation required has been disastrous for Gen Z's mental wellbeing. A [June 2020 study](#) by researchers with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention found that 63% of 18- to 24-year-olds in the U.S. reported experiencing some level of anxiety and depression due to the pandemic. A quarter of these young adults told CDC researchers that they had considered suicide in the past thirty days.

If there is a silver lining, it is that this "[most depressed generation](#)" is also the generation most likely to seek treatment for their mental health through counseling and therapy. That makes it critical to have these resources easily available on campus.

Tools for supporting wellness

Housing professionals remain on the frontlines of a major health crisis. The most valuable service they can provide to incoming Gen Z students is their continued recognition of distress indicators, behavioral changes and potentially alarming behavior among residents. Housing officers have long worked closely with on-campus clinical staff but should renew efforts to keep abreast of evolving resources for supporting students' mental health.

In addition to sensitivity to behavioral signals, we must all be able to recognize any evolving symptoms of COVID-19 or other prevalent infections and have procedures in place for managing mandated isolation, observation, and quarantines.

The pandemic has added another dimension to this generation's affinity for outdoor activities. Among the best tools at housing officers' disposal for supporting social distancing and wellbeing are outdoor common areas. Residents will react positively to outdoor programming. Previously underutilized basketball courts, volleyball nets, and grills may see a resurgence in popularity with increased appreciation for outdoor socializing. Supporting a connection to nature is an excellent strategy for housing professionals looking to encourage resident interaction for this health-conscious generation.

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