

# Supporting Your Student Through Roommate Conflicts

Parents/guardians are instrumental in providing support and assistance to students throughout their living experience. As your student adjusts to life on campus and living in the residence halls, there can be social adjustments and concerns about roommates and living situations. Often, you may hear of a roommate conflict before we do. If your student is experiencing a roommate conflict, please review our tips below:

## **HELPING YOUR STUDENT EVALUATE THE SITUATION**

- Listening is one of the most important things you can do. You can serve as a sounding board for your student, providing them support and perspective.
- Remind your student that every conflict has multiple sides and encourage them to consider what their roommate's point of view may be.
- Encourage your student to remember that roommate conflicts take time and effort to work through. Living with another person will always require ongoing communication, and it is healthy to work through conflict.
- Assure your student that having a roommate conflict is not a rare occurrence. Most students go through hard times with their roommates, and most are able to resolve their differences in a way that makes their living situation better for everyone.
- Helpful questions to ask your student:
  - Have you filled out a Roommate Agreement? What does that say about the current situation?
  - Have you spoken to your roommate about what you are feeling?
  - Have you asked your RA for advice?

## **HELPING YOUR STUDENT ADDRESS THE PROBLEM**

- Encourage your student to talk directly, and respectfully, to their roommate about their concerns. If your student is nervous, it may be helpful for them to practice this conversation or write down what they want to say.
- Encourage your student to talk with their roommate in a timely manner, rather than letting the conflict build up over the course of a semester or year. Talking about the little things will help greatly when a larger conflict comes along.
- Encourage your student to speak with their Resident Advisor or Resident Director. These staff members are trained to help students work through conflict.
- Allow your student to resolve their own roommate problems in their own way. Doing so will leave them better prepared to resolve problems on their own in the future.

- Encourage your student to whole-heartedly pursue other means of conflict resolution before requesting a new room. Often, students can successfully work through roommate problems. Additionally, the process of working through a roommate conflict provides them the opportunity to build valuable life-long skills. An immediate room change would result in your student losing out on the benefits the opportunity offers. However, if the conflict cannot be resolved after working through mediation steps, a room change is a very good option. It's far better to live in a more positive environment than to refuse to leave a negative environment in order to prove a moot point.

## **CONTACTING RESIDENCE LIFE STAFF**

- Consider Residence Life staff to be partners. We also want your student to have the best possible experience.
- Talk to your student first before you call Residence Life yourself. Your student may not want you to call Residence Life without their knowledge.
- Before calling Residence Life, familiarize yourself with the *Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act* (FERPA). In context of a roommate conflict, FERPA does not allow Residence Life Staff to discuss specific details of a student's conflict with their parent/guardian. However, the Residence Life staff will be happy to review with you the overall process in which we help residents work through conflicts.
- Contact your student's Resident Director yourself if you feel a situation exists that has overwhelmed your student's ability to work through it. We are happy to talk with you about your concerns and will arrange for your student to access necessary resources and support.