



Leaving the bubble: preparing Ridgefield seniors for their next chapters

Ridgefield, CT is among the nation's safest towns. Ranked #3 in 2017 and #1 in 2016, the town enjoys the comfort and security of relatively low crime rates -- virtually across the board. Coupled with quality health care options, including mental health services, a secure Ridgefield empowers families with confidence. It is, in many ways, a "bubble" of sorts, as it provides greater protection from many risks faced by other communities.

As our local high school graduates face the inevitable next step of moving away, it's easy for the class of 2017 – and their parents – to question if our young adults are fully prepared to make informed decisions that protect them from potential harm, and promote their health in college towns and major cities across the country – and the world.

Sure, our graduates believe they're ready, but are they fully aware of the risks they face with poor decisions about their safety, security, health and mental fitness? We want to believe the answer is a resounding yes, but covering the essential basics before they leave our fair hamlet will increase the odds.

This is a community service pilot for a ½-day seminar in July 2017 for up to 100 graduating seniors, and 100 parents of those seniors, to learn critical "must know" content on four key topics centered on safety and health: Dorm/Campus safety, Personal Security, Mental Health and Medical Health. Presented at a local Ridgefield facility, content delivery would come from subject matter experts in (4) 45-minute sessions, with groups of attendees rotating through each of the four topic areas. Presenters would prepare and deliver actionable insights in as interactive ways as possible.

While not designed to be all encompassing, the experience for graduates and their parents will be one filled with practical insights, positive energy, community support, and yes, some fun. The goal is simple: ease anxiety and increase confidence in Ridgefield graduates as they head off for their freshman year destinations, and do the same for their parents.

Content in core topics areas could include, but not be limited to:

Dorm/Campus Safety

- Presenter: Ridgefield Police Department/Sheriff's Department And West Conn College Campus police
- Topics: Safety protocols with roommates, dorm/room security; drug and alcohol issues/consequences, use of public transportation, walking/biking/exercise route selection, tips for avoiding becoming a target; safety at social events on campus; differences between campus and city/town police ... check list of things to do when students arrive on campus

Personal Security

- Presenter: Martial Artist Instructors with the Ridgefield Police Department
- Potential topics: Demonstration of key self-defense basics; being aware of unsafe environments; signs of potential aggressive behavior; tips to de-escalate altercations; use of devices (pepper spray, tasers etc); what the law allows; tips when leaving campus; using public transportation; check list of things to do when students arrive on campus

Mental Health

- Presenter: local mental health expert with experience in college counseling
- Potential topics: dealing with anxiety, depression, loneliness; homesickness; driving positive mental health in a new environment; dealing with difficult roommates or class situations; fostering new connections; avoiding common "freshman" mistakes; check list of things to do when students arrive on campus; tips for parents coping with first time college-bound kids and/or empty nesters.

Medical Health

- Presenter: Physician/nurse with college-age patient experience
- Potential topics: Identifying emergency care local resources; differences in campus health services vs local hospital/physician services; self-monitoring to assess when medical care is necessary; key tools to have handy; health risks associated with college environments; critical medical records and ensuring they're accessible; preventive medicine; check list of things to do when students arrive on campus

A Ridgefield Community Service Project

Sample agenda

8:00 a.m.	Registration/Doors open
8:30 a.m.	Welcome and Agenda Overview
8:45 a.m.	Move to Session 1
8:50 a.m.	Session 1 begins
9:35 a.m.	Move to Session 2
9:40 a.m.	Session 2 begins
10:25 a.m.	Move to Session 3
10:30 a.m.	Session 3 begins
11:15 a.m.	Move to Session 4
Noon	Move to Close Out/general session
12:15 p.m.	Potential Group Photo
12:30 p.m.	Adjourn Lunch

Rotation Schedule

With approximately 200 attendees, each Group session would need to accommodate about 50.

	Session 1	Session 2	Session 3	Session 4
Campus Safety	Group A	Group B	Group C	Group D
Personal Safety	Group B	Group C	Group D	Group A
Mental Health	Group C	Group D	Group A	Group B
Medical Health	Group D	Group A	Group B	Group C