

Amherst College Amnesty Policy
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What would you like ACEMS to say to people who ask us about amnesty?

Student Affairs operations are separate from any medical support that is provided by the college and **are not an extension of ACEMS services. ACEMS never shares our records with Community Standards.** Community Standards is never given a copy of our patient care report.

Case Management staff may have access to the Community Safety Team shift report and/or the ACPD report for a particular ACEMS call, but **not ACEMS documentation.** These reports only contain the patient's name and dispatch information.

Details that are ACEMS call specific (particular details of the incident, allergies, medications, past medical history, etc.) will be kept strictly confidential within the health and student support systems on campus. Further investigation and subsequent disciplinary action will **ONLY** be initiated in cases where violence or significant harm to another member of the community is present.

How do you define amnesty?

As an institution that receives federal funding, Amherst College is obligated to follow state and federal law: 21+ is the legal age for alcohol and cannabis consumption. There is, therefore, a follow-up process that the college has to initiate in instances of Alcohol & Other Drugs (AOD) usage.

In addition to alcohol and cannabis, other substances—such as cocaine, heroin, and fentanyl—are covered by the Amherst College Alcohol & Other Drugs amnesty policy.

Students' records are often requested from the college by third parties, including graduate schools, the federal government, or potential employers. If applied to an incident, amnesty allows the college to not report it on your record. There is no disciplinary action, but there is still a process that is undertaken.

The goal of this process is to give students the tools to be successful. It is not about changing their behavior, but helping them make well informed decisions and giving them the resources to do so. The college understands that students can make choices differently.

Is amnesty the best policy, or do they need a different level of care and support?

95% of the time amnesty is the best policy. If a student asks for help, then they should get help.

Minors (under 18)

Patients that are Amherst College students under 18, as per medical forms from Keefe Health Center, are medically emancipated and can thus consent to treatment and refuse ACEMS care without notifying parents/guardians. In regards to the amnesty policy, parental notification is rare, and only is warranted in the event there is a larger-than-normal threat to a student's well being (for example, if the student is seriously sick or incapacitated).

First years

It is important to acknowledge that often, first years have limited experience or may make poor decisions based on their new environment. They may have had different experiences in high school versus at Amherst with alcohol and other drugs. First years will **always** be referred to BASICS/CASICS training with an AOD educator following an AOD incident.

First years who have received ACEMS treatment multiple times

First year students with multiple alcohol or other drugs transports or ACEMS treatment need other types of support and resources. These are handled on a case-by-case basis. Students never attend BASICS more than once.

Students who are 21 years of age (Can legally drink but gets treated by ACEMS for alcohol or cannabis)

This is not a policy violation, so amnesty is not needed. A meeting with Case Management is still required to check in with the student. These cases could indicate a bigger concern, as this student has navigated 3-4 years at Amherst and has likely had experience with alcohol before. Often, these calls are less about the substance and more about the student's emotional/overall health.

Students in the middle (not first years but not 21 years of age)

A meeting with Case Management is still required to check-in with the student and assess whether or not they should be referred to BASICS/CASICS training, or other alternative resources. If this student has multiple alcohol or other drugs transports or ACEMS treatment they may need other types of support and resources.

Meeting with Community Standards

Regardless of a call's outcome (seen by ACEMS and refused, seen by ACEMS and AFD and refused transport, or seen by ACEMS and transported by AFD), an ACEMS patient will receive an email from Community Standards. Corey J. Michalos (Director of Community Standards) emails the student to schedule a meeting.

Week In Review Meeting

Each Monday, Amherst College administrators meet to discuss all ACEMS calls from the previous week. If there are no major concerns (violence, sexual respect/assault), amnesty is almost always applied to the student. The goal of this meeting is always to apply amnesty. Amherst College administration members in attendance include Community Standards staff, Rob Johnson (Community Safety Team Representative), Case Management, Meg Kreplin (Counseling Center Representative), Amanda Vann (Residential Life Representative), Detective Sullivan (ACPD Representative), and the Administrator on Call.

Meeting with the Student

In this mandatory meeting, Community Standards is trying to determine what led up to ACEMS being called. The goal of this meeting is to make sure that the patient is well, and to gain perspective on who they are as a person and what is going on in their lives. Whenever a student needs help, they can get help. **The college will not take a disciplinary approach.** Even though amnesty applies, a record of this meeting is kept in the Case Management office. This record is not shared with coaches, professors, parents, or the administration.

This meeting is led by Corey Michalos or a member of the Residential Engagement Team. The student will be asked questions about the incident, how they got to the point of needing to call ACEMS, and the decisions that were made. Possible questions revolve around what the patient ate or drank, how much they ate or drank, and over what period of time this occurred.

The Audit C. Concern test is utilized to gauge if the student is at risk for hazardous drinking or alcohol use disorders. Depending on additional details of the call, the student may be referred to BASICS training. First year students will always be referred to BASICS training.

The plan of action for the student is not decided before the meeting with Community Standards. It is decided with the wants and needs of the student in mind, and after the student's account is taken into consideration.

Assessing the Student

The following considerations are weighed when determining the best course of action (e.g. BASICS/CASICS, external programming/resources, etc.) for a student who was engaged in an AOD incident:

In some cases, the situation was a result of a rare moment of poor planning. (For example, perhaps the student did not like what was at Val and therefore didn't eat enough before drinking, or they did not time their alcohol consumption correctly.) BASICS might not be needed/it may not target the root cause of the problem, and thus it may be ineffective.

The student might suspect that there were other substances involved that were not a result of their decisions (i.e. their drink was drugged). If this is the case, and if it aligns with the wishes of the student, further investigative action is taken.

Other aspects of each call to consider include violence, past record (the student's conduct data on campus, including those that are non-ACEMS related), vandalism, or assault.

There could be instances where amnesty is applied more than once. For example, the first time for cannabis and the second for alcohol. BASICS/CASICS could apply in this situation. It is rare that amnesty is applied repeatedly for the same type of incident.

BASICS/CASICS

BASICS (Brief Alcohol Screening and Intervention for Students) and CASICS (Cannabis Screening and Intervention for College Students) are two-session programs with the goal of preventing repeated behaviors. These programs give students the tools to engage with alcohol and cannabis successfully. Case Management leans very heavily on BASICS for students. It is considered the best tool for getting them up to speed about living in the Amherst culture. If the student finds themselves in the same circumstances again, BASICS/CASICS will provide them with the tools to more successfully manage the situation.

Regardless of a call's outcome, first years will be referred to BASICS training. Students who fall under other age categories will be assessed on a case-by-case basis in their meeting with Community Standards.

Details of the BASICS/CASICS program are as follows:

- Facilitated by an outside contractor until the new AOD Educators begin in the fall.
- **First Session:** setting up journaling/collecting data for between the first and second sessions (self-monitoring exercise: carry paper to events to keep track).
 - Asking questions: Is this your first time drinking alcohol? Did you enjoy it? Did you not enjoy it? What are some strategies you used? Have you had conversations in your family around alcohol? Have you ever used any other substances?
 - Contractor records whether or not the student attends the session and follows through, but nothing more. This information stays in the Community Standards Office.
- **Second Session:** review of self-monitoring exercise.
 - Discussion around the student's notes of when they had alcohol or were using cannabis. This meeting takes place 10 - 14 days after the first session.
 - Asking questions: How much did you have? When did you start? When did you stop? In what context did you use it? With friends? With strangers? What was that experience like for you? What did you learn?
 - Strategies for students to use when they drink alcohol/use cannabis are discussed.

Use of Outside Sources

BASICS/CASICS training is only for alcohol and cannabis. Other substances such as cocaine, heroin, or fentanyl are covered by the Amherst College amnesty policy, but are not addressed by the BASICS program.

If the main concern is alcohol, the student is struggling with addiction, or there are other levels of concerns beyond the levels of support BASICS can provide, Case Management will do a substance assessment and ensure the student has plans to engage with external resources.

If the student is already working with someone/an outside organization, the college will defer to that relationship with an ongoing partner. Case Management will just need to confirm that the student is currently receiving help from an existing and legitimate organization.

If a student would rather work with an outside source, Case Management will work to make that arrangement. Examples of outside sources include Hampshire Hope, SafeProject (online organization), and other community partners that hold alcohol and other drug-related programming to get students the support they need.

Case Management wants to ensure that the student can get help in a way where they feel safe and respected. If the student can identify their own need, the college will work with them to make it happen.

Example of the Amnesty Letter from the Office of Community Standards

Initial Letter:

Dear [Student Preferred Name],

My name is [Name] and I work on the [Residential Engagement and Wellbeing Team | Care and Accountability Team]. I've learned that you or someone in our community reached out [on date] requesting support for a challenging situation. I'm writing to follow-up on this, offer support and resources, and to learn more about your experience. In this meeting, I want to share with you information about the College's amnesty policy and explain how that amnesty policy applies to this situation [[Alcohol & Other Drugs Policy](#)].

You may have worked with medical responders like ACEMS, Amherst Fire Department, or hospital staff this weekend; please note that any medical records or information shared with those responders was not shared with my office. I hope to work with you to learn about your experience.

We understand that this situation may have involved an alleged violation of the Student Code of Conduct [link]; however, your wellbeing and safety is our priority. Amnesty is designed so that we can focus on supporting your wellbeing and not an adjudication process. **Before 5:00 PM on [Date], please use this Calendly link to schedule a time for us to connect: [custom insert calendar links].**

Best,

[Name]

Follow-Up Letter:

Dear [Student Preferred Name],

Thank you for talking with me about your experiences on [on date]. I am grateful to have learned from you about your experiences at Amherst. As a reminder, we talked about the College's amnesty policy and how it applies in this situation. We also spoke about the educational resources available at Amherst in support of your success. In our conversation, we talked about how [BASICS | CASICS | Educational Reflection or Project] will support your success in navigating future social opportunities at Amherst.

The details we discussed include [specifics].

Please never hesitate to reach out if you need assistance or support while navigating Amherst.

Best,

[Name]

Amherst College Amnesty Policies

- [Student Code of Conduct \(Section 4\): Alcohol and Other Drugs](#)
- [Interim Title IX Policies and Procedures: about calling for help](#)
- [Non-Discrimination and Harassment \(race, ethnicity, religion\)](#)