



## Resources for Families

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We realize that sending your student to college is a time of tremendous transition for your family. All students (and their families) go through an adjustment period and experience many ups and downs while living away from home. There are many resources at the college to help your student manage community life at McKendree University.

In the Office of Residence Life, we deal directly with the student(s) who are experiencing conflict. This enables us to establish a relationship with your student and helps to get to the crux of the issues more efficiently. We do welcome parent input and questions at any time. Our goal is to provide parents with resources which they can pass on to their student to help them help themselves. As a college, our relationship is with the student, and it is important that we include them in the process, which could include copying them on e-mail responses, contacting them before returning your call and asking the Residence Life staff to follow-up on an issue parents bring to our attention.

It is important that students have support and encouragement from home while being allowed to mature through their own experiences. By all means, be there for your student as a sounding board, but let them handle their own problems as much as possible. We know this can be hard, but your student's success is dependent on their own ability to function independently.

### **Helpful Hints for Assisting your Student through a Roommate Conflict**

Many parents tell us that their student is "just not a conflict person" or their student "prefers to avoid conflict." Conflict is a natural part of life and we do well to develop skills which help us manage conflict respectfully, advocate for ourselves well, and resolve minor conflicts before they blossom into something much larger. Our roommate conflict and mediation process is designed to infuse learning these skills into these educational life experiences.

Families are instrumental in providing support and assistance to their student. By listening to your student, you can be a sounding board, providing support and perspective. You can help your student to understand their role in the process and empower them to affect their situation.

- Assure your student that having a roommate conflict is not a rare occurrence. Living with others requires ongoing communication. Most students are able to resolve conflicts in a way that meets everyone's needs.
- Listen to your student as they explain the conflict; ask if it could be a misunderstanding rather than an intentional dispute.
- Find out if your student completed a roommate agreement, and whether or not they have reviewed it lately. (All new students are required to complete a roommate agreement within the first few weeks of the semester. This is meant to be a living document that changes and evolves as students learn more about their roommates and themselves).
- Ask whether they have sat down and had a heart to heart talk with their roommate. Students often think they have communicated their feelings without having actually expressed them.
- Don't be afraid to question whether your student may have had a role in creating the conflict. Let them know you are not criticizing only suggesting a little self-examination. Remind them that every conflict has more than one side. Encourage them to consider why their roommate might see the situation from a different point of view.



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- Ask if they have contacted their RA to request roommate mediation. RAs are trained in conflict mediation, and we generally find that an unbiased third party can help students come up with solutions that they may not have discovered on their own. In more challenging situations, a series of mediations may be necessary. Please encourage your student to communicate with the RA if they feel that further intervention is needed.
- If your student is looking for additional information regarding roommate communication, please refer them to this page or refer them to the Residence Life Professional staff for their area

Please understand that roommate conflicts and room changes are not addressed by the Director or Assistant Director of Residence Life. It is also important to note that the University expects **students**, not parents, to work through the roommate mediation process.