



NW Insurance Council

Consumer Alert

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Kids starting college? Do *your* homework to make sure you have the right insurance

SEATTLE, August 27, 2020– Colleges and universities are starting to welcome students back amid the COVID-19 pandemic, with many offering classes online-only, in person on campus, or a mix of both. Whether a student is attending college from home online or away on campus, here's what parents and college-age students should know about insurance:

- **Contact your insurance company or agent** to discuss your current coverage and your insurance options. If your student's property is stolen or damaged while living on campus, those items are typically covered under standard [Homeowners](#) or [Renters](#) Insurance, but it depends on the student's living situation.
- **If your college student lives in a school dorm room**, his or her personal property is likely covered under your Homeowners Insurance policy, though all policy limits, exclusions and deductibles continue to apply.
- **If your college student lives off-campus**, a Renters Insurance policy may be needed for both personal property (at their residence or in their vehicle) and liability protection.
- **If your college student permanently moves away from home and is not living in campus housing**, this creates a possible coverage problem for his or her personal

property. Your student must reside in your household for his or her personal property to be covered under your policy.

- **You may be eligible for a discount on auto insurance** if your student is attending college at least 100 miles from home and not driving the family car while at school (or, even in some cases if they have a car but are driving limited miles while at school). Also, many auto insurance companies give discounts to students who maintain a B average or higher.
- **If your college student is a delivery driver** for a pizza parlor or other delivery service, make sure to review your auto insurance policy and/or contact your insurance company representative. Many personal automobile insurance policies exclude using your personal vehicle for income, which can create a coverage problem for damage caused in an accident while making a delivery. Many companies offer endorsements or additional, lower-cost policies to cover the “business use” of a personal vehicle.
- **If personal property is stolen from your college student’s vehicle** or is damaged while inside of it, your Homeowner’s or their Renters Insurance will generally cover the loss, minus your policy’s deductible.
- **Create an inventory of items** your son or daughter brought to school. Having a current inventory can help determine how much insurance is needed and will help speed up the claims process.
- **Tuition Insurance is offered** by some insurers, and can reimburse some, most or all of the cost of tuition and/or student housing if a student must withdraw from school due to specific, limited conditions – typically a qualifying medical event. One insurer recently quoted the cost for such a policy at about \$370 for \$10,000 of coverage. If your family is considering tuition insurance, it is critical to shop around, read reviews and read the policy language carefully. Not every medical condition or reason for withdrawal will be covered, and this coverage will not be “right” for every student or family. Here’s a recent article with more information from StudentLoanHero.com.

Preventing theft or damage

Burglary makes up more than 50 percent of campus crime, according to the [National Center for Education Statistics](#) (NCES). Below are a few steps students can take to help prevent damage or losses to their belongings:

- **Lock your doors** – Even if you’re leaving for a short period of time, lock up your dorm or apartment.
- **Don’t leave your belongings unattended** – The primary places where theft occurs include classrooms, the dining hall and other public places such as the library. Also, don’t tempt thieves by leaving expensive items, such as your laptop or phone, in your vehicle. If you must keep belongings in your car for a short period of time, put them in the trunk or somewhere out of sight.
- **Secure your laptop** – purchase a security cable with a combination lock for your laptop. Having it secured to an immovable object may deter a thief from attempting to steal it. Also, engraving electronics with your name or other identifying information may help police track stolen items.
- **Be careful when you cook** – Six out of seven fires in dormitories are started by cooking, and an average of 4,100 fires in college dormitories, fraternities, sororities and other related properties were reported each year from 2011 to 2015, according to the [National Fire Protection Association](#). If you live in a dorm, apartment or house make sure the room you sleep in and each living area has a working smoke alarm.

NW Insurance Council is a nonprofit, insurer-supported organization providing information about home, auto and business insurance to consumers, media and public policymakers in Washington, Oregon and Idaho.

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