

Yale students sue the university for 'systemic discrimination'

By **Micah Ward** December 2, 2022

On Wednesday, current and former students of Yale University filed a lawsuit against the school for its discriminatory policies against students with mental health disabilities and insisting that they withdraw.

In hopes to change the university's withdrawal policies, the [lawsuit](#) alleges that multiple students have been pressed to withdraw from the school. Additionally, those who asked for readmission were given "unreasonable burdens."

"For decades, Defendants Yale University and the President and Fellows of Yale (collectively 'Yale') have treated unequally and failed to accommodate students with mental health disabilities, including by modifying policies, in violation of federal," the lawsuit reads. "Yale's withdrawal policies and practices push students with mental health disabilities out of Yale, impose punitive consequences on students who have withdrawn, and place unreasonable burdens on students who, after a withdrawal, seek reinstatement."

In response, Yale spokesperson Karen Peart said the university is undergoing changes "that are responsive to students' emotional and financial well-being."

"The university is confident that our policies comply with all applicable laws and regulations," she said in a statement.

The documents address two students and an advocacy group, [Elis for Rachael](#), a group of alumni founded in 2021 with a mission to support students with mental health disabilities. According to the lawsuit, the students alleged that the administration pressured them to withdraw on their own account after they had been admitted to the hospital for attempted suicide and other mental health issues. If they failed to do so, the institution—with "little or no notice"—could involuntarily withdraw them.

"Yale's withdrawal policy provides for involuntary withdrawals for disability-related symptoms, including threat to self," the lawsuit reads. "It does not provide any deference to treating professionals or consideration of whether withdrawal will cause harm."

Hannah Neves, an international student, was hospitalized in 2020 after a suicide attempt.

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“The *Washington Post* article does not reflect Yale’s efforts to foster student wellness,” it reads. “The article fails to acknowledge the support, processes, and policies in place or the positive outcomes associated with our work. To be clear, the health and well-being of Yale students are primary university priorities.”

He concluded by saying the article was “deeply disturbing” for its attempt to spread “misinformation.”

However, another student mentioned in the lawsuit, Alicia Abramson, said she was forced to withdraw in 2019 when she was struggling with depression in her sophomore year. Yale’s policies prohibit students from attending part-time, which she said would have helped her balance school and her mental health.

The lawsuit also alleges that the university’s policies disproportionately hurt students from less privileged backgrounds.

“The impact of Yale’s discriminatory policies is harshest on students with mental health disabilities from less privileged backgrounds, including students of color, students from poor families or rural areas, and international students,” it reads.

But Salovey insists this is simply not the case.

“The need for student mental health and wellness support continues to increase, and Yale remains committed to responding to this need,” his letter concludes.

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