



## Guide to Peer Chats



PEER WELLNESS  
AMBASSADORS

**This guide is designed to help residents understand how Peer Chats work to get to know our PWA Coaches a little more. This guide contains answers to some frequently asked questions as well as bios for each of our coaches.**

### What are Peer Wellness Ambassadors?

Peer Wellness Ambassadors (PWAs) are a committed group of students who understand the importance of health and wellness and the value of connecting students to resources on campus to be successful while at the University of Alabama at Birmingham. Through intentional collaboration and support from university resources and the Office of Student Housing and Residence Life, Peer Wellness Ambassadors help to foster a healthy environment within first year and upperclassmen residence halls utilizing our two branches: **Education and Peer Coaching**. Our Education branch is made up of our **PWA Educators**, first-year UAB students who live and work in our first year residence halls to help create a healthy environment for our residents by offering engaging and educational programming that allow each member of our community to thrive and sustain the challenges, rigors, and stress of pursuing an academic degree while living on campus. Our Peer Coaching branch is made up of our **PWA Coaches**, upperclassmen UAB students trained in partnership with Wellness Promotion and Student Counseling to provide 1:1 peer coaching session to our on campus students through the Peer Chats program.

### What are Peer Chats?

Peer chats are **private**, non-judgmental, 1:1 chat sessions for residential students seeking assistance with concerns that affect **mental health** such as stress, feeling overwhelmed, life balance, test anxiety, sadness, loneliness, relational issues, homesickness and adjustment concerns. PWA Coaches prioritize creating a space for students to feel heard and understood by fellow students and connecting their peers with other mental and physical health and wellness resources on campus or in the Birmingham community.



## PEER WELLNESS AMBASSADORS

### How do residents schedule a Peer Chat?

Peer chats happen **Monday-Thursday, 6-9pm**. Residents interested in having a Peer Chat session don't need to schedule anything ahead of time. All they have to do is text their name and residence hall to the Peer Chat number and a PWA Coach will call them back to coordinate a meet up.

### Where do Peer Chats happen?

Peer Chats take place in all of the residence halls! When a resident texts the Peer Chat number, a PWA will call them to coordinate a meet up at one of the common spaces or study rooms in the resident's building. PWA Coaches will identify a space that the resident feels comfortable meeting. If all spaces in the resident's respective building are in use, PWAs can utilize another hall close by, the Courtyard, or any other outdoor space. The priority is ensuring the resident feels comfortable wherever they decide!

### Can Peer Chats be virtual or anonymous?

No. As of now, all Peer Chats will take place in person and residents are required to provide their name and residence hall. The only virtual aspect of a Peer Chat session is the resident reaching out via text message to request a call back from a PWA Coach.

### How can I be sure that my conversation with a PWA Coach is private?

As trusted members of our Residence Life team, PWA Coaches sign and agree to a code of ethics that emphasizes the privacy of student information gained through their role as a student staff member. PWA Coaches are not permitted to discuss or disclose any identifying information about residents who attend Peer Chats with one another. At the beginning of each Peer Chat, the PWA Coach will review a privacy statement with the resident so they are aware of the only instances in which the conversation will be shared with others, primarily when there are safety concerns or a referral to another on campus resource may be needed.

### What qualifications do the PWA Coaches have?

PWA Coaches are collaboratively trained by our Counselors in Residence with Student Counseling Services and the office of Wellness Promotion. These team members are taught peer education and coaching skills that emphasize active listening and decision-making to support and empower their peers in navigating the challenges of college and living on campus. PWAs receive ongoing training and support from our Counselors in Residence and the Residence Life office throughout the academic year to ensure they are maintaining their knowledge and skillset related to peer coaching.

### Is there a cut off time for Peer Chats?

Peer Chats end at 9pm. If a resident texts the Peer Chat number at or after **8:40pm**, a PWA Coach will follow up and give the resident the option of having a 20-minute Peer Chat or texting again during the next Peer Chat shift.



## PEER WELLNESS AMBASSADORS

### Are there any limits on a Peer Chat usage for residents?

PWA Coaches will cap Peer Chat sessions at 45 minutes, just like a typical counseling session. Residents do not have to use the whole 45 minutes if they don't want to. There is no cap on how many Peer Chats a resident can attend, however, excessive use may indicate a need for further support from Student Counseling Services or other resources outside the scope of Peer Chats.

### What happens if a resident texts the number outside of Peer Chat hours?

The Peer Chat number will send an automated message to anyone who texts the number outside of scheduled hours. The message contains the hours as well as the UABPD number for emergencies and a link to Togetherall for 24/7 virtual peer support. If a resident calls the number, they will be forwarded to the Peer Chat voicemail containing the same information.

### Can I request which coach I talk to?

You can always ask for a specific coach when you text the Peer Chats number however, each shift is only staffed with 2-3 PWA Coaches so the requested coach may not be available.

### Peer Chat Process

Resident texts their name and residence hall to the Peer Chat number.

PWA Coach receives text and calls resident promptly to coordinate a meet up location and the Peer Chat topic the resident wants to discuss.

Within 48 hours after the Peer Chat session, the resident will receive a link to complete an anonymous feedback survey about their experience with the program.

Text your **name** and **residence hall** to  
(205) 201-0678 to meet with a trained peer coach.



### Peer Chat Hours:

Monday -Thursday  
6:00 pm – 9:00 pm