

# The Daily Pennsylvanian

## Students sue Yale for allegedly discriminating against students with mental health disabilities

By **Camellia Bui** | 12/06/22 2:40am



*A lawsuit filed last Wednesday accused Yale of discriminating against students with mental health issues. Credit: [Kylie Cooper](#)*

A lawsuit filed last Wednesday accused Yale University of discriminating against students with mental health issues.

The 41-page suit was filed by Yale student mental health group Elis for Rachael and two current Yale undergraduates on behalf of all Yale students who have suffered from mental health disabilities. The plaintiffs allege that students who withdraw from Yale due to mental health reasons face harsher standards by the university, according to [Yale Daily News](#).

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Elis for Rachael is an advocacy group composed of alumni and the loved ones of Yale first year Rachael Shaw-Rosenbaum, who died by suicide in 2021.

The lawsuit followed an escalating debate about Yale's mental health policies after a recent [Washington Post article](#) criticized its policies of withdrawal and readmission for students with mental health issues. Soon after, administrators publicly issued statements defending the university's services and efforts to improve mental healthcare.

The lawsuit reads that the university has [made some reforms](#) but claims it failed to appropriately accommodate and support students with mental illnesses.

Yale junior Alicia Abramson, one of the student plaintiffs, told Yale Daily News that the university has only done "the bare minimum."

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"Yale has refused to make substantive changes to policies that discriminate against students with mental health disabilities despite our federally protected rights to accommodations," Abramson said.

The lawsuit claims that Yale's mental health policies violate the Americans with Disabilities Act, the Affordable Care Act, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, and the Fair Housing Act. The plaintiffs denied seeking financial compensation. They requested Yale make further reforms to its mental health policies.

Yale alumna and organizer of Elis for Rachael Alicia Floyd told the Yale Daily News that the lawsuit does not aim to be hostile towards the university but aims to make Yale better.

“Our top priority is to compel Yale to listen to students and hopefully in the process, give them some practice and improve their skills for the future going forward,” Floyd said.

Yale Interim Vice President of Communications Karen Peart told the Yale Daily News that the university leaders’ decisions and policies take into account the students’ “safety and health, especially when they are most vulnerable and that the university is “confident” their policies abide by applicable regulations and laws.

The class-action lawsuit around Yale’s policies is part of a larger debate about mental health in higher education.

Stanford University settled a student-led lawsuit three years ago by removing mandatory leave of absence for mental health reasons and allowing students more disability accommodations if they stay. Last year, Brown University also made changes requested by an investigation by the U.S. Justice Department, according to the Yale Daily News.

In 2016, Penn created the **Mental Health Task Force** on Student Psychological Health and Welfare amid pressure to address a series of student suicides on campus. Penn students have questioned the way **the policies have fallen short** and failed to address continued cases of suicides.

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