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Off to college: insurance checklist

With the anticipation and anxiety of sending your child off to college, insurance is not top of mind. But taking the time to be sure your child and his or her belongings are covered when at college can save money and aggravation if losses occur. Here are seven:

Personal property

1. Take and maintain a full inventory of your child's valuables. The costs of computers, tablets, bicycles, musical instruments, and other belongings add up quickly.
2. If your child stays in a dorm room or college-owned property, compare the value to your homeowner's policy personal property coverage. Most policies restrict coverage to 10% of your personal property coverage and deductibles apply.
3. If the child lives off campus or your homeowner's policy is insufficient, consider a modestly priced renter's policy, which can also provide liability protection. The building owner's insurance will not protect personal property.
4. If your child will be traveling abroad or leaves belongings in a dorm or fraternity/sorority house for more than 45 days, your homeowner's policy may no longer cover those belongings.

Auto

5. If your child has a car at school, be sure to provide the new address and review the coverage with us. State requirements vary and there are potential good student discounts.
6. Let your child know what to do if he or she is in an accident. WreckCheck, http://www.insureuonline.org/auto_wreckcheck_guide.pdf, is a mobile app from the National Association of Insurance Commissioners that may be helpful. It uses a mobile device's location service, audio recorder and camera to document the accident and helps create and send an accident report. It's also a good idea to keep a printed insurance checklist in the car.
7. If your child does not take a car to school, it's a good idea to keep the child on your policy to cover driving when the child returns home or drives a friend's car that may not be adequately insured. Even as a passenger, the child would have access to the Uninsured/Underinsured coverage limits as an excess over another's policy, if needed. A Distant Student Discount may apply.

The age of the child and the enrollment status, full- or part-time, can also affect coverage. To avoid unpleasant surprises, contact us and be sure your child is properly covered for this important venture.