

For Faculty and Staff

As a Faculty or Staff member you have an important role in students' efforts to seek help. You may often be in direct position to observe students and you may become aware of behavior that concerns you. Students may also turn to you to obtain advice and support. The Counselor is available to consult with in these matters. The information below can assist in identifying a student who may be in distress. There are also tips for talking with students and statements to assist as you consider referring a student to the Counseling Center.

Recognizing a Student in Distress

The Referral Process

Through interactions or observations you may become aware of changes that indicate a student is experiencing some level of stress.

Some indicators of Emotional Distress

Interpersonal

- Seeking an inordinate amount of time
- Asking for help with Personal Problems
- Hanging around the office
- Inability to get along with others
- Complaints from other students
- Students isolating self from others

Behavioral

- Change in personal hygiene
- Irritability
- Tearfulness
- Impaired speech
- Disjointed thoughts
- Difficulty concentrating
- Disruptive behavior
- Intense emotional reactions

- Inappropriate responses
- Physically harming self
- Dramatic weight gain/loss
- Depressed or lethargic behavior

Academic

- Procrastination
- Uncharacteristically poor preparation or performance
- Repeated requests for special consideration
- Disruptive classroom behavior
- Extreme fatigue/sleepiness in class
- Excessive absence/tardiness
- Avoiding or dominating discussions
- References to suicide, homicide or other violence in verbal or written statements
- Consistently low grades
- Decline in quality of work
- Lack of participation
- Change in typical behavior
- Student reports having hard time concentrating or learning

Changes in Personal Relationships

- Death of family member or close friend
- Divorce or break-up of close relationship
- Problems with Family/Friends

Students may report external factors which hamper academic success and are indirect calls for help.

For example:

"I just broke up with my boy/girlfriend"

"I just don't feel like doing anything but sleep."

"I'm feeling overloaded and I can't get my work done."

"I'm having problems at home."

"My parents are splitting up."

"I don't have transportation."

"I'm really worried about my (mother/father, etc.)"

"I feel like I just can't do anything right."

"I'm putting everything off, I just procrastinate."

An online assessment is available and may also assist in your observations of a student's behavior. www.ulifeline.org/villa/self_evaluator

Statements to Assist in the Referral Process

The following statements are some suggestions for how you may want to introduce the possibility of pursuing counseling.

"I've noticed you've missed some classes lately and I am concerned."

"I can tell you are very worried/upset/feeling down, we have staff that can help."

"Some problems are just too unreasonable to manage on your own."

"It sounds like you've tried everything you can...it's time to get some help."

"Our counseling staff is here to assist students; would you like me to call while you're here so you can schedule a time to meet?"

"I think it would help to talk to our counseling staff, I'd be glad to walk over with you and introduce you."

Sometimes students, even those in significant distress, are reluctant or unable to acknowledge a need for help.



Tips for Talking with Students

- Talk to the student privately to help minimize embarrassment and defensiveness.
- Express your concern in a non-judgmental way. Respect the student's value system even if you do not agree with it.
- Let the student know the limits of your ability to help.
- Do not promise confidentiality regarding what he or she states.
- Make student aware of Counseling Services. (It often helps to remind the students that many successful people have used counseling or coaching at some point and it can be an important tool to help overcome obstacles and reach potential.)
- Encourage Counseling Services

Referrals

There are a few different ways to refer students, listed below are from least to most effective—

- Tell students about the Counseling Center
- Agree that the student will call the Counseling Center to arrange appointment – provide number and location.
- Facilitate referral by having the student call from your office to arrange appointment
- Walk with the student to the Counseling Center and support the student in making an appointment.

If you feel it is urgent, with the permission of the student, call and ask for an immediate appointment. If Counselor is not available, please leave a message.

If you are unsure about the appropriateness of referral, or are met with resistance when referring a student, call for consultation- it will not be necessary to divulge the name.

If Student Exhibits Behaviors that Indicate Mental Health Crisis

- Remain Calm
- If possible, offer a quiet place for the student.
- Call 911 for Emergencies.
- Call Security – 870-7176 or speed dial 2 on hall phone.
- Call for assistance
Staff Extensions –
 - Counseling - 1821
 - Health Services – 2852
 - Campus Ministry – 1813
 - Student Life – 1878
 - VP – Student Services – 1838

After hours, if this is a Mental Health Emergency please phone:
Erie County 24-hour Crisis Services at 716-834-3131

SEVERE DISTRESS

Severe Distress requires Immediate Attention

Highly disruptive (hostile, aggressive, violent, etc.) inability to communicate clearly (garbled, slurred speech: unconnected or disjointed thoughts)

Loss of contact with reality (hearing/seeing things, exhibiting behavior or expressing beliefs that are greatly at odds with reality or probability.)

Threats to himself/herself or others

Overtly expresses orally or in writing suicidal thoughts

Feeling of hopelessness, intense sadness, apathy, sudden mood swings or outbursts.

Inappropriate behavior, aggressive acts, disobedience, or rebellious acts.

Giving away values, possessions, seeming “in control” of life, or making final plans.

NOTE: This list is not meant to serve as a comprehensive list as students may exhibit other behaviors that are serious, but may not be listed.

Consultation

The Counselor is available to consult with faculty/staff about questions you may have. Also, if you suggest that the student come to the Counseling Center and he or she declines, you can still talk with the Counselor about your concerns who can offer general advice and suggestions for how to encourage the student to use services, even if it is just for a one-time visit.

It is important to note, however, that the Counselor is not in position to discuss specific students, nor indicate whether a particular student is or is not being seen at the Counseling Center without a release signed by the student.

Additional Information for Faculty

Class Presentations/Workshops

The Counselor can provide classroom presentations or assist with facilitating group discussions on numerous topics that relate to personal growth and can complement course content. For example:

Communication Skills

Interpersonal Skills – on the job and in relationships.

Understanding Personality Types

Developing appreciation for, and understanding the differences between personalities utilizing the Myers-Briggs Type Personality Indicator.

Conflict Resolution

Recognizing tension on the job, in the classroom or in relationships and how to begin resolution.

Anxiety

What to do when experiencing symptoms and how to reduce anxieties.

Depression

Understanding symptoms in self and others and how to begin overcoming depression.

Problem-Solving

Develop strategies for how to cope with and resolve problems

Presentation of Self

Understanding how individuals convey attitude and create positive or negative perception.

Stress Management/Reduction/Relaxation Exercises

Review causes of stress, how stress manifests itself physically, emotionally, and in our behavior. Recognizing the difference between positive and negative stress. Participate in a relaxation exercise.

Tapping Creativity

Tips for expanding creative abilities.

Grief

Dealing with the mourning process, what to expect and how to cope.

Understanding the Concept of Wellness

Reviewing the dimensions of wellness and the integration of body, mind, spirit in the promotion of well-being.

Counseling Center

Library Building—Ground Floor

Palma Zanghi, L.C.S.W.

961-1821