

## Counseling Center

### Policy/Procedure

#### Services Offered

##### *Counseling*

Confidential counseling is offered to students for the treatment of mental illnesses and/or substance abuse concerns, support and guidance through developmental challenges, as well as the promotion of positive psychological wellbeing. During the initial assessment, the student will be presented with counseling options that match their current presenting problem and their history. Counseling options may include individual, couples, or group counseling. Individual counseling is offered primarily on a short-term basis with students being seen weekly or every other week. Group counseling is available primarily as a standalone treatment option, although at times students may be seen for both group and individual counseling. Couples counseling is provided on a limited basis. Students in need of a higher level of care may be referred to community resources.

##### *Medication Evaluation and Management*

Medication evaluation and management is offered to clients of the Counseling Center throughout the academic year. Consulting psychiatric staff provides these services as an adjunct to the treatment services provided by the Counseling Center therapy staff. Students seen for an initial assessment at the Counseling Center may be offered or may request to consult with the psychiatric staff regarding the possibility of medication to aid in treatment. Students who choose to use this service are required to maintain a relationship with a therapist at the Counseling Center. Students not interested in therapy may be seen by the Counseling Center psychiatry staff as long as time in schedules allows and the student is able to continue a case management relationship with a therapist at the Counseling Center. Students who are interested in medication only and not an ongoing relationship with a therapist (for treatment or case management) will be referred to their home providers or a provider in the community.

##### *Crisis Intervention*

The Counseling Center provides assessment, triage, and intervention services in crisis situations. Students experiencing a crisis who cannot wait until their next scheduled appointment (if already in services) or who do not yet have an appointment scheduled can meet with a counselor during Open Hours. The counselor will spend a brief time with the student assessing the crisis and assisting in creating a plan for how to manage the crisis until the student's next appointment. In a psychological emergency (e.g., possible hospitalization for suicidal thinking, psychosis, mania, threatening behavior toward others), the Counseling Center provides 24-hour on-call services in conjunction with the offices of Public Safety and Student Life. Students experiencing an emergency during business hours day call or present in person to the Counseling Center for assistance. After business

hours, students can call the Department of Public Safety to access the on-call team via Student Life and the Counseling Center as appropriate.

### *Consultation*

The Counseling Center provides consultation to the campus community regarding student mental health, particularly regarding general information about mental illness, how to recognize signs of distress, and how to refer a student to the Counseling Center. Consultation is not confidential in the same manner as treatment services; however, the staff at the Counseling Center will keep the information private and share it with the student in question or others on a need to know basis only. The Counseling Center may also encourage those consulting to also share the information with important others on campus with a need to know (e.g., the Dean of Students Office) so that we can close information gaps and assess the urgency of a given situation to the best of our ability.

### *Outreach*

The Counseling Center provides a variety of outreach services to the campus community for the purposes of education, prevention, stigma reduction, and increasing awareness of available services. These include presentations and workshops on topics related to mental health, promotion of healthy behaviors that promote psychological wellbeing, screenings for mental illness, as well as information about the services provided at the Counseling Center. These services are provided to students, faculty, and staff and can be tailored to a specific group's request if received with sufficient planning time. Additionally, educational information and anonymous screening opportunities can be found on the Counseling Center website.

## **Concern for Student Mental Health**

College students encounter a great deal of stress during the course of their academic experience. As a result, some individuals experience difficulty in their personal, social and/or academic lives. Meeting with a professional staff member at the Counseling Center can help students get back on track; however, many students may not initially seek help from the Counseling Center due to a lack of awareness about services available, stigma about utilizing services, or symptoms that get in the way of help seeking behaviors. For this reason, others in the campus community are an important resource in helping students with mental health concerns to get the help they need. Here are some ways to identify when someone may be in need of help and some strategies for referring that person for counseling.

### *Recognizing When a Student May Need Help*

1. **Changes in Mood or Behavior:** Actions which are inconsistent with an individual's normal behavior may indicate that he or she is experiencing psychological distress. An individual who withdraws from usual social interaction, stops communicating with friends and family, has periods of unexplained crying or outbursts of anger, or seems unusually anxious, depressed, or irritable may be in need of counseling services.

2. Traumatic Changes in Personal Relationships: The death of a family member or close friend, difficulties in family or romantic relationships, or the ending of a romantic relationship can result in increased stress and psychological difficulties.
3. Drug and Alcohol Abuse: Excessive drinking, drug abuse, or drug dependence pose serious health risks and will interfere with a student's ability to succeed academically. In addition, drug or alcohol abuse sometimes indicates the presence of psychological problems.
4. Physical Concerns: Students who report headaches, nausea, insomnia or excessive sleeping, loss of appetite, or other physical complaints with no apparent medical cause may be experiencing psychological difficulties.
5. Adjustment Difficulties: In adapting to new academic and social environments, coping with living away from family and in a residence hall with a roommate, some students feel anxious, sad, or homesick. Difficulties may also occur when a student returns from overseas study, is anticipating graduation, or other major life transitions.
6. References to Suicide or Self Harm: If a student talks about current thoughts of suicide or self harm, an immediate referral and/or consultation is necessary via contacting the Counseling Center directly during office hours or the Department of Public Safety after hours. In the case of an actual suicide attempt, you should immediately call the Department of Public Safety at 717-245-1111 so the student can be transported to the hospital.

### *How to Make a Referral*

In non-emergency situations, the following can be used as guidelines for speaking to the student about coming to the Counseling Center. If there are concerning behaviors present, it may also be important to let the Dean of Students Office know of your concern so that the campus can best assess the urgency of the situation (e.g., whether the student is also exhibiting concerning behaviors in other areas of functioning).

- Present your concerns to the individual in a direct and specific manner, but avoid making a diagnosis. For example, "I've noticed that you rarely eat meals with us anymore, you seem tired and sad, and you look like you are losing weight. I'm worried about you."
- Suggest that the student consider talking to a professional at the Counseling Center. If you are on campus, you might offer to walk the person to open hours or call together to set up the appointment.
- Even if you think a student needs counseling, he or she has a right to disagree with you. If a student does not decide to seek help, and you remain concerned about him or her, it's a good idea to reiterate your concerns at a later date and consult with the Counseling Center and/or the Dean of Students Office about your concerns.
- If you are unsure of how to approach a student you are worried about, or a student has responded negatively to your approach, feel free to call the Counseling Center at 717-245-1485 for consultation about what to do next.
- In emergency situations involving students who are unwilling or unable to seek help on their own and are at risk to harm themselves or someone else, call Public Safety at 717-245-1111.

<b>Related Information</b>
----------------------------

<b>History/Revision Information</b>
-------------------------------------

**Responsible Office/Division:**

**Effective Date:**

**Last Amended Date:**

**Next Review Date:**

**Also Found In:** Counseling Center Web Site ([www.dickinson.edu/departments/couns/](http://www.dickinson.edu/departments/couns/)),  
Student Handbook, Bulletin