

## **COUNSELING & PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES**

### **REFERRAL GUIDE FOR FACULTY AND STAFF**

The purpose of this guide is to assist faculty and staff in their efforts to promote a positive education and personal growth experience for students at Frostburg State University by providing information about situations or circumstances where the Counseling & Psychological Services (CAPS) might be of assistance.

During the 2006-2007 academic year CAPS provided services to 589 individuals, representing approximately 11.9% of the student population. This represents both individual and group clients, and amounted to 2,598 contact hours. Faculty and staff at the University continue to be the largest referral source for students to CAPS accounting for 20% of clients last year.

CAPS provides services to students in areas related to academic, personal, and career development. Services are provided on a voluntary basis by appointment and without charge to students. All conversations are kept confidential, which means no record of counseling is made on an academic transcript or in a job placement file, and no information about counseling is released without the written permission of the student.

The staff currently consists of two licensed psychologists, a licensed professional counselor, a counselor (doctorate in psychology), and a drug and alcohol education coordinator.

Frostburg State University  
Counseling & Psychological Services  
Sand Spring Hall 101  
301-687-4234

Hours: 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Monday through Friday

**ROLE OF FACULTY AND STAFF IN ASSISTING STUDENTS WHO HAVE PROBLEMS:**

Students often experience significant changes in their lives during the course of their University experience. At times, these changes can become stressful enough to seriously threaten their academic work. Very often, stress associated with academic, social, family, work, and/or financial concerns is inter-related and may result in the student turning to you for help. Students may turn to anyone whom they perceive as knowledgeable, caring, and trustworthy as a potential ally in times of turmoil.

Your willingness to lend special assistance to students will undoubtedly be influenced by your personal style and philosophy. Certainly, situational factors such as class size or demands within your office will have a significant effect on the type of interactions that you might have with students. There is considerable evidence, however, that faculty and staff are in a first line position to identify students who are in trouble. Your timely expression of interest and concern may be a critical factor in helping students resolve problems that interfere with academic survival and achievement.

**CONSULTATION AS A RESOURCE:**

CAPS provides consultation for faculty and staff regarding concerns about an individual student, behavioral problems in a classroom or University office, and other issues that may have psychological dimensions. There is an "on-duty" person who is available each day to handle consultation. Every effort will be made to respond to requests for consultation as soon as possible. Please let our secretary know if you think the situation is an emergency requiring immediate attention.

**WHEN COUNSELING MIGHT BE BENEFICIAL:**

There are as many reasons for entering counseling as there are people seeking such services. Some individuals may be dealing with a time-limited problem with which they would like some assistance. Others may be dealing with an on-going situation or issue and still others may want to enhance their own personal development. Regardless of the particulars, the following information will serve as a guideline in determining whether a referral to CAPS is warranted. In order to prevent possible misinterpretation of a single isolated behavior, it is usually advisable to look for clusters of signs appearing at the same time.

**1. Stated Need For Help:**

Students may state their need for help directly or indirectly. It is important to attend to both the words and the underlying intention and feeling in the message. Listening means paying attention to the way the message is said, tone of voice, facial expressions, and gestures used by the student.

**2. References to Suicide:**

It is important to distinguish between a theoretical discussion of suicide and a statement that reflects personal anguish. However, if the student makes statements concerning details of how, when, or where s/he may be considering suicide immediate referral is necessary. Regardless of the circumstances or context, any reference to threat or attempt at suicide should be considered serious. It is dangerous to conclude that a student's talk of suicide is merely a bid for attention. No judgment about the seriousness or potential lethality of suicidal talk, thought, or gesture should be made without consultation with a mental health professional.

In the case of a suicide attempt on campus, please call (301-687-4222) to summon an ambulance and University Police.

**3. Changes in Mood or Behavior:**

Any actions that are inconsistent with an individual's typical behavior may signal psychological distress. Such behaviors as withdrawal from usual social interactions, lack of willingness to communicate, asocial acts, unexplained crying or emotional outbursts, repeated absence from class, and unusual irritability that are not common to the individual may signal a psychological problem.

**4. Anxiety and Depression:**

Two of the more common psychological disturbances that can create significant problems for students are anxiety and depression. These are fairly common emotional states which if prolonged or severe can seriously impair an individual's functioning in all areas of life. When an individual's ability to function becomes impaired due to anxiety or depression, some type of assistance is advisable.

**5. Physiological Symptoms:**

Individuals who experience tension-related headaches, nausea, or other physical ailments without apparent organic cause may be dealing with psycho physiological symptoms. Such symptoms are real for the individual and so is the pain. Other physical manifestations suggestive of possible problems include loss of appetite or excessive eating, insomnia or excessive sleeping or gastrointestinal disturbance.

**6. Traumatic Changes in Personal Relationships:**

Personal problems frequently occur because of a change in personal relationships. Death of a family member or close friend, marital difficulties, family problems, divorce, shift in family responsibilities, and difficulties in significant relationships can all adversely impact on the individual's sense of well being and seriously threaten academic work and overall functioning.

**7. Drug and Alcohol Abuse:**

Indications of excessive drinking, drug abuse, or drug dependence usually signal psychological problems and may manifest with a deterioration of academic performance, drop in class attendance, or impaired interpersonal relationships.

**8. Career/Academic Major Choice Problems:**

Students commonly go through periods of career indecision that are often associated with dissatisfaction with an academic major, unrealistic career expectations, lack of adequate information, and/or confusion about values, interests, and abilities. Chronic indecisiveness or choice conflict can be debilitating for the individual and very often assistance is needed to help the student develop alternative goals.

**9. Learning Problems:**

College-level academic work often presents greater demands than many students realize. All students go through an adjustment period with regard to this issue. However, students demonstrating a consistent discrepancy between potential and actual achievement may be in need of assistance. Test anxiety, insufficient study habits, and repeated absences from class are all issues that might warrant counseling intervention.

**10. Retention Issues:**

Our evaluation data has shown that CAPS services are effective in student retention efforts. Students struggling with a decision to drop out of school, transfer to another institution, or concerned with potential academic failure may benefit from counseling while they are engaged in the decision-making process.

**WHEN TO REFER:**

Aside from the signs or symptoms that may suggest a need for counseling, other guidelines may help you define the limits of your involvement with a particular student's problem. A referral is usually indicated in the following situations:

1. When a student presents a problem or requests information that is outside your range of knowledge.
2. When you believe personality differences, that cannot be resolved between you and the student, would interfere with your helping the student.
3. If the problem is personal and you know the student on other than a professional basis (friend, neighbor, relative, etc.).
4. If the student is reluctant to discuss the problem with you for some reason.
5. When you do not believe your attempt to help the student has been effective.

**HOW TO REFER:**

When you have decided that the student might benefit from professional counseling, set aside a time and place to meet with the student where you will not be disturbed. It is usually best to speak to the student in a straightforward manner that conveys your concern for his/her welfare. It is not advisable to attempt to deceive or trick the student into counseling. It is important to make it clear to the student that this recommendation represents your best judgment based on your observations of the student's behavior. Be specific regarding the behaviors that have raised your concerns and avoid making generalizations about the individual.

It is important to remind the student of your limitations in helping, ("I'm your professor and I am concerned about you, but I can't be neutral in this situation" or "I am not trained to deal with this kind of a concern"). This conveys your support and the realistic limits of what you can do in the situation.

Except in emergencies, the option must be left open for the student to accept or refuse counseling. Anticipate that the student will be uneasy with the idea of counseling, and reassure him/her that seeking counseling does not mean s/he is crazy. If the student is skeptical or reluctant for whatever reason, simply express your acceptance of the feelings so that your own relationship with the student is not jeopardized. Give the student room to consider other alternatives by suggesting that s/he might need some time to think it over. If the student emphatically says "no," it is important to respect the decision, and again leave the situation open for possible reconsideration later.

If the student agrees to the referral, you may have the student call CAPS to make an appointment; the student may call from your office. The first contact with CAPS will typically be an intake interview during which the student and a counselor will explore the issue at hand and make decisions about the type of help appropriate to the situation. Intake appointments are typically scheduled within two to three days of the student's request. Students requiring immediate help because of psychological distress are seen on a same-day basis. It is advisable to follow up with a student later to show your continued support even if s/he did not accept your attempted referral.

**IN EMERGENCY SITUATIONS** in which a student is unwilling or unable to seek help on his own, faculty members may call CAPS (301-687-4234) or University Police (301-687-4222). On occasion, it has been necessary to admit students suffering acute psychological distress to Western Maryland Health System – Braddock Campus.

CAPS has adopted an on-call policy that is in effect whenever classes are in session. A staff member is available after regular office hours and on weekends through a cell phone. Campus Police and senior Residence Life staff have access to the cell phone number and can reach a staff member in the event of an emergency. If you become aware of an emergency, after the CAPS office has closed, or on weekends, you may contact Campus Police who will alert the counselor on duty. Campus Police are available at 301-687-4222.

**THE CONFIDENTIALITY ISSUE:**

It is important for you as a member of the University community to understand that counseling sessions are confidential in nature and information pertaining to such sessions or content of those interviews cannot be released without the student's written consent. CAPS adheres strictly to this policy except in situations where clear danger to the individual or others is present or as may be required by law.

If you are interested in a student's contact with CAPS, such information is best obtained directly from the student. Students are not bound by confidentiality and may share whatever information they wish with others.

**REFERRAL TO OTHER SOURCES:**

Sources of assistance for students may include other offices both on and off campus in conjunction with or in place of professional counseling. These sources include referral to the FSU psychiatric consultant or a physician, Brady Health Services, Residence Life Office, parents, a member of the clergy, Social Services, Allegany County Health Department, Student Support Services, P.A.S.S., etc. Students are likely to become discouraged and frustrated when they feel passed along from office to office without receiving the assistance needed. If you are unsure of the appropriate place to send a student for specific information or help, please give CAPS a call (301-687-4234) for information.

**Counseling & Psychological Services**

**2006-2007**

**Spencer Deakin, Ph.D.**

Director

Licensed Psychologist

**Jay Coughlin, Psy.D.**

Licensed Psychologist

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