

What You Should Know About Making a Referral to CAPS

Faculty and staff are not expected to provide psychological counseling. That is the role of CAPS staff. CAPS professional staff is trained to assess and intervene with emotional problems and psychological disorders. In some instances you may wish to refer distressed and distressing students to CAPS.

When you have decided that professional counseling is indicated ...

... inform the student in a direct, concerned, straightforward manner. Because many students initially resist the idea of counseling, it is useful to be caring, but firm, in your judgment that counseling will be useful; to be clear and concrete regarding the reasons you are concerned; and to be familiar with the procedures and the counseling services or other help-giving agencies on campus. Except in emergencies, it is important to allow the student to accept or refuse counseling.

Suggest that the student call or come in to make an appointment.

Provide them the CAPS phone number (831) 459-2628 and location (Cowell Student Health Center). Remind the student that our services are free and confidential. If they would like more information before calling, they can visit the CAPS website at www2.ucsc.edu/counsel/.

Sometimes it is useful and necessary to assist the student more directly ...

... in making an appointment. In these instances, you can offer the use of your phone or call CAPS yourself, while the student is in your office. Occasionally, you may think it wise to actually walk the student over to the CAPS offices. This can be especially helpful to students who are unsure about the location and/or are intimidated about meeting with a CAPS staff member for the first time.

Please note:

If you are concerned about a student but unsure about the appropriateness of the referral, feel free to call CAPS at (831) 459-2628 for a consultation with a professional staff member.

(Adapted from UCD)

What You Should Know About Characteristics of Distressed or Distressing Students

Sometimes it is very clear when a student is having difficulty coping and sometimes their distress is masked with less obvious characteristics. Some obvious and not-so-obvious signs of distress to look for are:

Problems with Academic Performance

- Poor academic performance and preparation, particularly if such behavior represents a change in previous functioning
- Excessive absences or tardiness, especially if representing a previous change in functioning
- Chronic indecisiveness or procrastination
- Repeated requests for special considerations
- Increased concern about grades despite satisfactory performance
- Increased dependence- student hangs around you or makes excessive appointments to see you during office hours

Traumatic Change in Academic Status

- Academic Probation
- Academic Dismissal

Unusual Behavior

- Listlessness, lack of energy, or falling asleep in class
- Disruptive classroom behavior
- Marked changes in personal hygiene
- Impaired speech or disjointed, confused thought
- Aggressive or threatening behavior
- Extreme mood changes or excessive, inappropriate display of emotions
- Hyperactivity, irritability, or heightened anxiety
- Prolonged or extreme emotionality
- Dramatic weight loss or weight gain with no apparent physical illness/reason
- Bizarre or strange behavior indicating a loss of contact with reality
- Use of mood altering chemicals(e.g. alcohol or drugs)

Traumatic Change in Relationships

- Death of a family member or close friend
- Difficulties in marriage or close relationships
- Problems with family or roommates

References to Suicide or Homicide

- Overt (or veiled) references to suicide-verbally or in writing
- Statements of helplessness or hopelessness
- Indications of persistent or prolonged unhappiness
- Isolated self from friends and family
- Pessimistic feelings about the future
- Homicidal threats

Other Common Stressors That Students Experience

- Isolation and loneliness
- Identity confusion
- Break-up of intimate relationship
- Low motivation or inability to establish goals
- Serious illness
- Academic pressure or failure
- Parenting responsibilities
- Cultural oppression/discrimination
- Outside work or family pressures
- Rejection by family

(Adapted from UCD and OCCDHE guidelines)

What You Should Know About Responding to Distressed or Distressing Students

Because you come in frequent contact with many students, you are in an excellent position to observe students, identify those who are in distress, and offer assistance. Your care, concern, and assistance will often be enough to help the student. At other times, you can play a critical role in referring a student for appropriate assistance and in motivating him/her to seek such help. A few guidelines for responding to distressed or distressing students are summarized below:

Observe

The first important step in assisting distressed students is to be familiar with the symptoms of distress and attend to their occurrence. An attentive observer will pay close attention to direct communications as well as implied or hidden feelings.

Initiate Contact

Don't ignore strange, inappropriate or unusual behavior- respond to it! Talk to the student privately, in a direct and matter-of-fact manner, indicating concern. Early feedback, intervention, and/or referral can prevent more serious problems from developing.

Clarify Your Role

When you assume or are placed in the helper role, role conflicts are possible and must be understood. Some students may see you as a figure of authority and this perception may influence how helpful you can be. You may feel friendly with your student, which may make it difficult for you to act objectively in the academic or classroom management role.

Listen Objectively

Listening has frequently been called an art, but it is also a skill that can be acquired with practice. To listen to someone is to refrain from imposing your own point of view, to withhold advice unless it is requested, and to concentrate on the feelings and thoughts of the person you are trying to help, instead of own. Listening is probably the most important skill used in helping and can be facilitated by allowing the student

enough time and latitude to express thoughts and feelings as fully as possible. Some things to listen for include a student's view of him/herself; view of his/her current situation or environment and the view of the future. Negative comments about these issues indicate a student may be in trouble.

Offer Support and Assistance

Among the most important helping tools are interest, concern, and attentive listening. Avoid criticism or judgmental comments. Summarize the essence of what the student has told you as a way to clarify the situation. Encourage positive action by helping the student define the problem and generate coping strategies. Suggest resources that the student can assess: friends, family, clergy, or professionals on campus.

Know Your Limits

As a help-giver, only go as far as your expertise, training, and resources allow. If you are uncertain about your ability to help a student, it is best to be honest about it. Trust your feelings when you think an individual's problem is more than you can handle.

When a student needs more help than you are able or willing to provide, it is time to make a referral to a professional. Below are some signs to look for in you feelings that may suggest the assistance of a professional is warranted:

- You find yourself feeling responsible for the student
- You feel pressure to solve their problems
- You feel you are over-extending yourself in helping the student
- You feel stressed-out by the student's issue(s) or behavior
- You see a behavioral pattern repeating itself in your interaction with the student
- You feel that the problems a student brings to you are more than you can handle
- You feel anxious when the student approaches you

Consult With CAPS Staff

In your attempt to help a student, you may need to talk with a professional. The Counseling and Psychological Services staff can suggest possible approaches to take with students or provide you with support. Call CAPS (831) 459-2628 and tell the receptionist that you wish to speak with the on-call services. If your situation is an emergency, call 911.

(Adapted from UCD and OCCDHE guidelines)

What You Should Know About Responding to Student Emergencies

Emergency situations are rare: however, immediate and decisive action is necessary when they do occur. Generally, a psychological emergency involve one or more of the following conditions:

- A suicide attempt, gesture, threat, or stated intention
- A homicidal attempt, gesture, threat, or stated intention
- Behavior posing a threat to self
- Behavior posing a threat to others
- Loss of contact with reality
- Inability to care for self

In the event of an emergency, it is helpful to follow these basic guidelines:

- Stay calm, as this will help you respond more effectively, and also help to reduce the student's anxiety or agitation
- If possible, provide a quiet, private place for the student to rest while further steps are taken
- Talk to the student in a clear, straight-forward manner
- If the student appears to be dangerous to self or others, do not leave the student unattended
- Make arrangements for appropriate intervention or aid

The primary campus resources for responding to mental health emergencies are Counseling and Psychological Services and the Campus Police. The following options are available to you:

- Phone consultation with a CAPS staff member is available at (831) 459-2628 during weekday work hours of 8:30 am to 5:00 pm.
- You can walk the student over to CAPS for crisis consultation during the health center receiving hours of 8:30 to 4:30 pm weekdays.
- If the student is unusually aggressive or otherwise unmanageable, the UCSC police are available to offer assistance at 911
- Be prepared to provide as much information as possible about the student and the situation to the campus resource you contact

(Adapted from UCD)