Identifying and Referring the Distressed Student: a Faculty/Staff Guide

The college years can be stressful for many. In the contemporary climate of competition and pressure, some students adequately cope with these stresses, but others find the stress becomes unmanageable and interferes with learning. In some cases, these students may even disrupt the learning of others.

Your Role

Many students initially seek assistance from faculty or staff members. Below are guidelines for identifying students in distress:

- Excessive procrastination and very poorly prepared work, especially if inconsistent with previous work performance.
- Infrequent class attendance with little or no work completed.
- Dependency (e.g. the student who hangs around or makes excessive appointments during office hours).
- Listlessness, a lack of energy, or frequently falling asleep in class.
- Marked changes in personal hygiene.
- Impaired speech and disjointed thoughts.
- Repeated requests for special consideration (e.g. deadline extensions).
- Threats to others.
- Expressed suicidal thoughts (e.g. referring to suicide as an option).
- Excessive weight gain or loss.
- Behavior which regularly interferes with effective class management.
- Frequent or high levels of irritable, unruly, abrasive, or aggressive behavior.
- Unable to make decisions despite your repeated efforts to clarify or encourage.
- Bizarre behavior that is obviously inappropriate for the situation (e.g. talking to something/someone that is not present).
- Students who appear overly nervous, tense, or tearful.

Guidelines for Interaction

- **Privately** talk to the student about your observations.
- **Reflect** your concern. Be as specific as possible in stating your observations and reasons for concern, site examples when able.
- **Listen** carefully to everything the student says.
- Repeat the essence of what the student has told you so your attempts to understand are communicated.
- **Avoid** criticizing or sounding judgmental.
- Consider the ASU Counseling Center as a resource and discuss referral with the student.
- If the student resists referral and you remain uncomfortable with the situation, contact Counseling Center staff to discuss your concern.
How to Make a Referral to the ASU Counseling Center 
(Located In the Compass Point Annex @ 344-2529)

1. Encourage a student to call or to walk-in to make an appointment at the Counseling Center. Give them the Counseling Center phone number and location at that time (noted above). You can offer to support the student by assisting them in phoning for appointment. When you reach the Counseling Center receptionist, identify yourself as a faculty or staff member and inform them that a student you are sitting with would like to make an appointment. The student’s name and ID number are required for the appointment. The administrative assistant will provide an appointment day and time which the student should write down.

2. If the situation is an emergency or urgent (a person is an imminent threat of harm to themselves or another), after identifying yourself as faculty/staff, tell the receptionist that the student needs to see a counselor immediately. Give the receptionist the student’s name and ID number then ask to speak with an available staff member. *If it is an emergency, it may be necessary for you to walk the student directly to the Counseling Center.

3. If you are concerned about a student but unsure about the appropriateness of a referral, feel free to contact us for a consultation.

Services are free to ASU enrolled students and are provided by psychotherapists licensed at the independent practitioner level. Services include:

- Individual, couples and group counseling
- Alcohol and Other Drug assessment, education and referrals
- Referrals to community based treatment providers as requested or necessitated
- Crisis Intervention
- Skill building workshops such as stress management

Counselors

Jeanne McGowan, MSW, LCSW
Helen Schandolph, LCSW
Ruth Duran-Duffley, LMSW

Location

ASU Counseling Center
Student Affairs Annex @ Compass Point
7000 Building (The one with a balcony next to the student health clinic)

Phone Number

(912) 344-2529

08/2015
Office Hours

Monday through Friday
8:15AM-5:00PM

After Hours Service

ASU Counseling Center staff can be reached for psychological emergencies outside of regular office hours by calling Campus Police at (912) 344-3333.