

TIPS FOR FACULTY AND STAFF

Referral of Distressed Students



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OBSERVE FOR SIGNS OF A STUDENT IN DISTRESS

- increased nervousness, agitation, or irritability
- withdrawal from others (isolation)
- sudden changes in academic performance
- memory problems
- sudden changes in personal or classroom relationships
- chronic fatigue, low energy or sleeping in class
- abrupt radical changes in behavior
- infrequent class attendance
- marked change in personal hygiene
- fearfulness
- dependency (e.g., the student who always hangs around you or constantly tries to see you)
- signs of depression (frequent crying, insomnia, oversleeping, sudden weight loss/gain, loss of pleasure)
- increase in drug and alcohol abuse
- talking about death or suicidal thoughts
- confusion - including bizarre, alarming, or dangerous behavior

MAKE THE DECISION

In cases when you are not sure whether or not to refer, please call the Counseling & Health Services and ask to speak to a counselor regarding your concerns. The Counseling & Health Services staff is available to assist with decisions about how to be most helpful. Sometimes referral is indicated and sometimes it is a matter that may best be addressed in another manner. Aside from the signs or symptoms that may suggest the need for counseling, there are other guidelines that 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. The student is demonstrating signs and symptoms of distress.
2. A student presents a personal problem or requests information about how to address the problem in situations that are outside your range of knowledge. The problem is more serious than you feel comfortable handling.
3. A student is reluctant to discuss a problem with you for some reason.
4. You have exhausted your resources in trying to be of help and believe the student needs more assistance than you have been able to provide.

CALL FOR CONSULTATION

If you are in doubt about whether or not to refer a student to counseling, or would like suggestions on how to approach a particular student, please call Counseling & Health Services and speak with one of our counselors (606-783-2123). A telephone consultation may help sort out relevant issues, explore alternative approaches and identify other resources which may better serve the student's needs. **If your consultation questions are of an urgent nature (suicidal, sexual assault, death of a loved one, etc.) inform the receptionist that your situation is of an urgent nature that requires immediate attention or call 911 if an emergency response is needed. Do not delay getting help for the student's and your safety.**

FOLLOW THE FIVE STEPS TO REFERRAL

1. **Speak** with the student one-on-one. A person is more likely to be open to a suggestion of counseling if you are not making that suggestion in front of others.*
2. **Identify** the specific behavior that you have observed and how it concerns you. Here is an example of something that you might say: "I've noticed that you haven't been participating in class much, your grades have dropped, and you look like you might be feeling down. I'm concerned about these changes, and I just wanted you to know that there are counselors at Counseling & Health Services who are trained to help you with the feelings you might be experiencing. What would you think about making an appointment to see one?"
3. Encourage the student to contact Counseling & Health Services directly (783-2123) to schedule an appointment. Sometimes it is helpful to have the student make an appointment from your office or in your presence. You may even want to consider walking the student over to Counseling & Health Services if the student is experiencing a crisis.
4. **Ask** the student if they scheduled an appointment or call the Counseling & Health Services while the student is in your office. Due to client confidentiality laws, we cannot inform you as to whether or not a student has made or kept an appointment without the student's written permission. Write down the appointment date and time.
5. **Follow-up** with the student by inquiring as to whether the appointment was kept and how the student felt about counseling.

*The Early Intervention System (EIS) has been created to identify those students experiencing problems at MSU (<http://www2.moreheadstate.edu/dos/eis/index.aspx?id=5769>). The option of contacting EIS or the Dean of Students is also an available resource.

COUNSELING CENTER STAFF

The Counseling Center is staffed by fully licensed psychological practitioners, counselors and social workers. Selected master level interns work under the supervision of licensed staff members. Counselors are available to talk to staff or faculty members and share our common goal of working as a team to resolve the concerns of our students.



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