

University of the District of Columbia Counseling and Wellness Center

Faculty-Staff Referral Guide



Enclosed are Tips for Referring Students to the Counseling Center

- How the Counseling Center Operates
- Confidentiality
- When to Refer
- Suggestions for Making Successful Referrals

Purpose

This guide is to assist faculty and staff in making referrals, identify situations that the student might benefit from coming to the Counseling Center and suggest reasons for possible referral.

Counseling

The University of the District of Columbia, Counseling and Wellness Service is dedicated to promoting psychological wellbeing that enriches personal, career and academic growth. We provide a broad range of high quality, innovative, and ethical services, resources and information to students, staff and faculty. The Counseling Center also actively contributes to the campus' broader academic mission by training and developing students and professionals, helping build a multicultural learning community, and providing leadership through collaborative partnerships.

Counseling Center Hours

The Counseling Center is open Monday through Friday from 9am-5pm. There are evening hours available on certain days of the week. The Counseling Center is staffed by three licensed psychologists and doctoral trainees.

The Role of Faculty and Staff

Faculty and staff members are in a position to observe a student's behavior and identify possible problems. Your knowledge and expression of interests in a student's well-being may be a critical factor in a student's willingness to receive help. Faculty and staff are encouraged to refer a student by urging the student to make an appointment on the phone (202-274-6000) or in person (Bldg. 39, Suite 120) for a consultation. The faculty and staff may also walk the student over to the Center if they are concerned.

In an emergency that involves a threat or incident of serious disruption to the learning environment, faculty and staff members should first contact Public Safety.

First Visit

The initial appointment with a counselor is typically made through the front desk for a consultation. During the appointment, referral options including for

counseling services are decided upon between the student and counselor. The goal is to discuss the reasons for coming to the Counseling Center, help the student identify the issues that are causing the most concern, to put the student at some ease, and offer the option of continued counseling.

Confidentiality

Meetings between a student and counselor are confidential. Information about the counseling session, including the fact the student was seen in counseling, cannot be released without the student's explicit written permission. The only exception to this policy is if the student is assessed as being a danger to self or to others, or if student disclosed abuse of someone unable to protect him/herself.

Psychiatric Referrals

Counselors make referrals to other resources on and off campus for specialized services. If psychiatric services are warranted, a student is referred to or assisted with using their insurance provider's website to in-network psychiatrists or agencies. This may be an option for a few of our students. For cases in which the student does not have insurance coverage adequate to make a psychiatric referral, students that are DC residents are referred to the K Street Clinic (DMH) at 35 K Street, NE, 2nd Floor Washington, DC for medication management with free pharmacy services. MD and VA resident students may be referred according to the Psychiatric Referral Resource List in our office.

When to Refer

There are signs and/or symptoms that may suggest a need for counseling and there are other guidelines which might help you to define the limits of your involvement:

- A student asks for help beyond your range of knowledge
- There is a conflict or personality difference between you and the student
- A student is reluctant to discuss a problem with you
- A student seems to be too dependent on you
- You feel uncomfortable dealing with the issues because of your personal or academic relationship with the student.
- You lack sufficient time to effectively help the student
- Student exhibits odd or eccentric behavior

Reasons for Referral

Stated Need for Help

A student may ask directly for help, however many times they may communicate the need indirectly. A student may be distressed, tearful, angry, display intense emotions, or exhibit bizarre behavior. Listen attentively to their communication and observe their body language. This will help you identify if a student has a problem. Let the student know that you are available, concerned, and will offer assistance.

Reference to Suicide

Faculty and staff should take seriously students who say that they are contemplating suicide or who indicate details of how, when or where they will complete suicide. If you suspect that a student may be suicidal, asking them about it will not increase the chances of suicide attempt or encourage suicidal gestures if they did not already exist. In fact, asking directly can be experienced as an expression of care and concern that can begin to decrease the risk of suicide. In the case of a student who is feeling suicidal, **an immediate referral is appropriate.** Walk the student to the Counseling Center to talk with a psychologist. If for some reason, that is not possible, call us at 202-274-6000 to consult about the student.

****In some cases, the campus police may need to be called to escort the student to the Counseling Center.***

Academic Problems

Many students experience difficulty transitioning from high school to college or challenges managing demands of life and attending college. Poor study habits, frequent absences, difficulty concentrating, and declining grades might indicate a need for counseling. The counseling staff will assist with coping strategies and the Accessibility Resource Center (located in Building 39 Room 102) facilitates accommodations for students whose disabilities have been properly documented.

Changes in Mood or Behavior

Anxiety and depression are two of the most common psychological problems that students experience. If the problems are prolonged or severe, it can be very

debilitating. If a student's normal functioning is impaired such as crying spells, antisocial acts, withdrawal from social activities, irritability or marked changes in academic performance or appearance, the student may benefit from talking to a psychologist.

Traumatic Changes in Life

Distress may come from traumatic situations in life such as death of a loved one, an end of a significant relationship, divorce or separation of parents, experiencing rape or any form of victimization. When an individual is exposed to a traumatic event, he/she is more at risk to be a victim of violence or crime. The individual may benefit speaking with a psychologist

Drug or Alcohol Use

Often people drink and take drugs as a way to cope with or attempt to alleviate other problems. However, this coping style may interfere with his or her academic, social and relational function. The individual may benefit speaking with a psychologist.

Suggestions for Making a Referral

- Communicate your concern about the behavior you have observed and invite the student to talk about what he or she is experiencing
- Create positive expectation; a successful outcome is likely if you express your confidence in the counseling center staff
- Learn about the Counseling Center and the services it provides. Contact your Counseling Center Liaison for support
- If the student agrees to be referred to the counseling center, invite him or her to schedule an appointment or walk them over.

Emergency Referrals

A student in crisis is usually seen immediately in the Counseling Center during office hours, Monday through Friday, 9am-5pm. If an emergency happens after hours please contact 202-274-5050. During a crisis, a student may appreciate a faculty or staff member walking him or her to the Counseling Center or staying with him/her through the intervention. A crisis might include suicidal ideation,

drug or alcohol reaction, sexual or physical, or bizarre or aggressive behavior. At any time you have serious concerns about a student's safety (physical or emotional), please treat the situation as an emergency and contact the Counseling Center or Campus Police.

Non-Emergency Referrals

It may be difficult to suggest counseling to a student, it is best to communicate directly to the student about your concern regarding his or her wellbeing. Address your concern specifically to the student. The option to follow through with counseling is left to the student. If the student expresses any hesitancy in seeking counseling, express your acceptance. The student may need more time regarding seeking counseling at the time. However, present information about the counseling center regarding where it is located and how to contact us. Please inform students that counseling is confidential and is not connected to his or her academic record.

University of the District of Columbia

Counseling and Wellness Center

Van Ness Campus

Building 39

Suite 120

Main: 202.274.6000

Fax: 202.274.5016







**KEEP CALM
AND
BE GOOD
TO
YOURSELF**

Counseling & Wellness Center
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