

Managing Distressed and Distressing Students

By Eliza McArdle, Ph.D., Director of Counseling Services

For Hampshire College Faculty

- Speak directly to the student about your concerns, preferably in a private place.
- Be specific about the behaviors you've observed that have caused your concern.
- Ask direct questions.
- Be a good listener.
- Avoid labeling or diagnosing the person or the person's behavior.
- Frame the decision to seek and accept help as a courageous, mature choice.
- Offer alternatives and establish hope.
- Respect the person's privacy, *but only up to a point*.
- If you have serious concerns, consult!

Call Hampshire Health and Counseling Services (413-559-5458) if, **at any point**, you aren't sure what to do.

How to talk about counseling services

- When referring students to the Counseling Center, suggest it as a **possible resource**.
- Ambivalence is often characterized by statements such as, "I don't want to go there because my problem isn't that serious." or, "I don't want to go there because I think my problems are too serious and they can't help me."
- You may want to tell the student that the **Counseling Center** is used by over 400 students a year and by up to 50% of the student body throughout their time at Hampshire.
- Let them know that they can just speak to a counselor on a **one-time basis** without making a commitment to on-going therapy.
- Remind the student that our services are FREE and CONFIDENTIAL.
- If they are hesitant about Counseling Services for ANY reason, remind the student that there are many sources of support on campus: Spiritual life, house directors, CASA, advisors, Interns, the wellness center and more. While none of these sources provide psychotherapy, many of them are the first or second step to getting help.

How to make the appointment

- Suggest the student call or go to the Counseling Center to make an appointment, giving the telephone number and location to them at that time. If you want to offer extra support, you can have the student call the Counseling Center from your office. Our extension is **5458**, and we are located next to the red barn.
- It is usually **most effective** to assist the student by calling for an appointment with the student present. When you reach the Counseling Center receptionist, identify yourself as a faculty or staff member and hand the phone to the student.

What if it's urgent?

- If you feel the situation is an emergency or urgent enough to require immediate attention, after identifying yourself as faculty or staff, tell the receptionist that the student needs to

see a counselor today (or immediately). Give the receptionist the student's name and then ask to speak with an available staff member.

- Any information that you can give to the counselor who will be meeting with the student is VERY helpful. Ask to leave a voice mail message for the assigned clinician or, if possible, ask to speak directly with the assigned clinician. It is best to do this when the student is not sitting with you.
- It may be necessary for you to walk the student to the Counseling Center.
- If you are concerned about a student but unsure about the appropriateness of a referral, feel free to call the Counseling Center for a consultation.
- If the student resists referral and you remain uncomfortable with the situation, contact the Counseling Center to discuss your concern.

After hours URGENT SITUATIONS

- In case of an emergency **after hours**, you can reach the on-call clinician by contacting campus police, identifying yourself as faculty and describing the situation. You may ask to speak directly with the clinician who is on-call.
- After hours, **students** should ask for the house director on-call, who will then assess the situation and contact the on-call clinician when appropriate.

Know your limits!

Signs that you may be over extending:

- Feeling stressed out or overwhelmed by the situation.
- Feeling angry at the student.
- Feeling afraid.
- Having thoughts of "adopting" or otherwise rescuing the student.
- "Reliving" similar experiences of your own
- Talking to a student more than several times per week or late at night.
- Feeling angry at the systems in place that aren't working the way you would like.
(Communicate with us! Help us understand what you are experiencing. There may be pieces of information that we don't have. We will help you understand our systems, even if we can't give you specifics about a particular situation.)
- When in doubt about how much you should be doing, call us. [(413)-559-5458] We will usually return your call the same day. If you need to speak with a clinician immediately, please let the receptionist know.

REMEMBER: We are here to assist you with helping your student. **Don't hesitate to call** and ask to consult with the on- call clinician. They will return your call promptly if they are unable to speak with you at that moment. In case of serious emergency, ask to speak with a senior clinician immediately. A clinician will be interrupted and take your call.

Counseling Services STAFFING

We are staffed by three doctoral level psychologists, a social worker, two post-doctoral clinicians, and two pre-doctoral, masters level psychotherapy interns. (Total staffing 4.75 FTE)

We have an identified on call clinician 24/7 and have time set aside each day for emergencies. We are open 8:30-5 M-F x5458 in Montague house, next to the red barn.