



A Faculty and Staff Guide for Referring Students to Counseling Services

The college years mark an important period of personal and psychological growth that can sometimes be stressful for students. Some students may experience difficulty coping. You, as a faculty or staff member, may be one of the first to become aware of personal difficulties affecting a student.

About HNU Counseling & Psychological Services

Counseling Services is committed to providing comprehensive, quality services for all students dealing with developmental concerns or psychological problems. The staff is available to assist students with their personal and social concerns in hopes of helping them achieve satisfying educational and life experiences. Services offered include:

- Free and confidential individual, couples, & group counseling for students
- Consultation for faculty and staff
- Psycho-educational programming
- Crisis assessment and intervention

Indications for Counseling

The reasons that individuals seek help from counselors are as varied as people themselves. An individual's motives for seeking counseling might range from wishing to solve a particular problem to desiring to enhance his/her own personal development.

The following indications can be useful in making a decision about referring an individual to Counseling Services. To prevent possible overreaction to a single or an isolated behavior, it is advisable to look for clusters of signs that appear at approximately the same time.

- A Stated Need for Help
- Changes in Mood or Behavior
- Anxiety and Depression
- References to Suicide or Violence Towards Others
- Consistent Unhappiness or Anger
- Consistent Excessive Worry or Stress
- Family Problems or Stress from Events at Home
- Struggles with Making a Big Decision
- Trauma or Loss
- Drug and Alcohol Abuse
- Career Choice Problems
- Identity and Acculturation Issues
- Self-esteem Concerns
- Academic Problems
- Student Is Acting Strange Or Not Making Sense

When to Refer

Aside from the signs or symptoms that may suggest the need for counseling, there are other guidelines that may help you to define the limits of your involvement with a particular student's problem. A referral is usually indicated in the following situations:

- A student presents a problem or requests information that is outside your range of knowledge.
- You feel that personality differences between you and the student will interfere with your helping the student
- You feel uncomfortable dealing with the issue or problem because of your personal relationship (he/she is a friend, neighbor, relative, etc.)
- A student is reluctant to discuss a problem with you
- You do not believe your counseling with the student has been effective
- You lack sufficient time to listen effectively to the student
- A student is becoming over-reliant or dependent upon you
- A student may be disruptive in class.

If in doubt, feel free to call Counseling Services at (510) 436-1530. We are available to discuss the situation, give you support, and/or help you clarify your next steps.

How to Refer

When you have determined that a student might benefit from professional counseling, we suggest the following guidelines:

- **Use a direct approach** with the student and express your concern for his or her welfare. Do not attempt to deceive or trick the student into seeking counseling. Make it clear that this recommendation represents your best judgment based on your assessment of his/her particular problem(s). Be specific regarding the behaviors that have raised your concerns, and avoid making generalizations about the individual.
- **Anticipate student concerns and fears about seeking counseling.** Be prepared to address them. Some typical issues are presented in the next section.
- **Create a positive expectation.** It is important that you firmly believe that counseling can help and communicate that belief to the student. A successful outcome is more likely and your credibility is heightened by integrating this measure into the process.
- **Explain to the student how Counseling Services works.** The quickest & easiest way to get in touch with counselor is to either drop by the Counseling offices located in **Durocher A 5-7**, or to call Counseling Services at **ext. 1530**. Students may also send email to counseling@hnu.edu. Students will be assigned to a counselor based on staff availability for appointments.
- **Leave the option open, except in emergencies, for the student to accept or refuse counseling.** If the student is skeptical or reluctant for whatever reason, simply express your acceptance of those feelings so that your own relationship with the student is not jeopardized. Give the student an opportunity to consider other alternatives by suggesting that he/she might

need some time to think it over. If the student emphatically says "no," then respect that decision, and again leave the situation open for possible reconsideration at a later time.

- **Ask the student at a later date what action he/she has taken.** Even if the student did not accept your attempted referral it will show your continued interest.

Student Concerns about Counseling

Students often have a number of concerns about counseling and seeking assistance that, if not directly discussed, can deter them from acting upon a referral. It is useful to anticipate these issues and subsequently to make responses that are factual, encouraging, and appropriate.

Concern 1: *Only crazy people go to counseling (and I'm not crazy).*

Response: I don't think you are crazy. People go to counseling for all kinds of problems. Counseling Services sees many students a year for individual, couples, and group counseling.

Concern 2: *Going for counseling is a sign of weakness. It shows I can't handle my own problems.*

Response: You are capable of handling most of your problems. There are some, however, that are difficult to handle alone. Recognizing when you need assistance, and then getting it, is a sign of good problem-solving ability.

Concern 3: *Counseling won't work for me. It's not effective. I've done it before.*

Response: There are no guaranteed results, that is true. There is a high probability, though, that counseling can be helpful. It has worked for a large number of students and it could work for you. Give it a try. Even if it hasn't helped before sometimes the right counselor can be really helpful.

Concern 4: *The counselor will tell other people about my problem.*

Response: What you share with a counselor is confidential. Information is not released to anyone (parents, friends, instructors) without your permission.

Emergencies

An emergency can occur anytime and may require immediate action. The following are examples of emergency situations:

- Suicidal gesture, stated intention, or attempt to commit suicide.
- Behavior posing an imminent threat to the student or others.
- Demonstrated inability to care for oneself.

Any reference to suicide should be taken very seriously, and a referral to Counseling Services is strongly advised. If the reference includes any mention of details of a suicide plan, immediate response is critical.

How to Respond to an Emergency

- If possible, offer a quiet place for the individual to talk.
- Listen to the person, while maintaining a straightforward, considerate, and helpful attitude.
- Do not leave the individual alone, unless you feel concerned for your own safety.
- Secure help as soon as possible.

If there is concern about someone harming him/herself or someone else, you should inquire about:

- Whether s/he has thought about hurting him/herself or someone else
- Do they have a plan
- Do they have the means to carry out the plan

Whom to Call in an Emergency

When faced with a mental health emergency, please contact the Director of Counseling Services at (510) 436-1530. If the student is a resident on campus, you may also contact Director of Campus Life and Civic Engagement at (510) 436-1294 or the Coordinator of Residence Life, at (510) 436-1442. Campus Safety can be reached at (510) 436-1600. If you are concerned about imminent danger to the student or others do not leave the student alone. You can call the local 24-hour **crisis support hotline** at (800) 309-2131. If you must call 911, be prepared to provide as much information as possible, including:

- Your name and position, and the name of the student in question
- Description of the situation and needed assistance
- Exact location and description of the person in need of help

If, for psychiatric reasons, you need to take a student to the **hospital**, please ascertain if they have health insurance. If so, please go to Alta Bates in Berkeley. (They have the best services in the area and have worked with many students.) If the insurance is Kaiser, the student should be taken to Kaiser Oakland. If they have no insurance, they must be taken to the county psychiatric hospital, John George, in San Leandro. If possible, call ahead to let hospitals know that the student is coming.

Hospitals

Alta Bates Summit Medical Center (Berkeley Campus), psychiatric intake (510) 204-4405
2450 Ashby Ave, Berkeley, CA 94704

Kaiser Permanente, Oakland, information (510) 752-1190
280 W. MacArthur Blvd., Oakland, CA 94611 (Entrance on Howe St., around the corner)

John George Psychiatric Pavilion, psychiatric emergency services (510) 346-1420
2060 Fairmont Drive
San Leandro, CA. 94578

Eden Medical Center: (510) 537-6500
13855 East 14th St., San Leandro, CA 94578

Confidentiality

Professional ethics as well as law dictate that the sessions conducted by Counseling Services staff are confidential. Information about those sessions or their content will be released only (a) upon a student's written request, or (b) in circumstances that would result in clear danger to the individual or others, or as may be required by law. Faculty/staff members often have an understandable desire to know if a student who has been referred to the services has actually attended a session and/or if any progress is being made. The desired information can best be obtained directly from the student. We also encourage students to let the referring faculty/staff member know that he/she kept an appointment. Students are not bound by the rules of confidentiality and are therefore free to disclose any information they wish to share.