

Referring a Student for Professional Help

When to refer

In many cases of student distress, faculty and staff can provide adequate help through empathic listening, facilitating open discussion of problems, instilling hope, validating and normalizing concerns, conveying acceptance, giving reassurance and offering basic advice. In some cases, however, students need professional help to overcome problems and to resume effective functioning.

The following signs indicate a student may need counseling:

- The student remains distressed following repeated attempts by you and others to be helpful.
- The student becomes increasingly isolated, unkempt, irritable, or disconnected.
- The student's academic or social performance deteriorates.
- The student's behavior reflects increased hopelessness or helplessness.
- You find yourself doing ongoing counseling rather than consultation or advising and feeling yourself pulled in directions with which you are uncomfortable.
- The student shows significant and marked changes in behavior and mood.

How to refer

Speak to the student in a direct, concerned and caring manner.

Because students may initially resist the idea of counseling, be caring but firm in your judgment that counseling would be helpful. Also, be clear about the reasons that you are concerned ("I am worried about you doing okay in school and I bring this up really because I care about how you are doing.").

Be knowledgeable in advance about the services and procedures of the Counseling Center and other campus help-giving agencies.

Suggest that the student call to make an appointment, and provide the phone number to the Counseling Center (607-274-3136) as well as the location (Lower level of the Hammond Health Center.)

Sometimes it is useful to actively assist students in scheduling an initial counseling appointment. You can offer the use of your phone or call the receptionist yourself while the student waits in your office. Include the student in the process of relaying information to the Counseling Center

In some situations, you may find it wise to walk the student over to the Counseling Center. You could review the Counseling Center website with the student as well www.ithaca.edu/sacl/counseling

If you need help in deciding whether or not it is appropriate to make a referral, call the Counseling Center (607-274-3136) for consultation with a clinician.

Referring to the Counseling Center, not to a particular person, may facilitate an earlier appointment. Students may request a particular counselor, but they may have to wait longer, if that counselor's schedule is full. Whenever possible, we try to honor student's requests and preferences in choosing counselors.

Follow-up with the student about their welfare. Don't pry, but let the student volunteer the information that they would like to share. Remember, it may not be necessary for you to have all the details, and a student might prefer privacy.

Communicate continued concern and openness to help.

Once a referral is made, communication between the student and the Counseling Center is confidential. State law and ethical code prohibit disclosure of confidential information, including whether or not appointments are kept.

Behaviors, attitudes, feelings take time to change, and a student may show slow progress or, for a while, none at all. Trust the process and communicate your continued concern and availability.

Facts about the Counseling Center:

Office hours are 8:30 am-5:00 pm Monday through Friday.

The Counseling Center generally operates on an appointment basis. Students wanting an initial meeting with a counselor should call the center (607-274-3136) or stop by (the lower level of the Hammond Health Center building) to make an appointment. Appointments are usually available within a week, although during the busiest times of the year, the wait might be somewhat longer. After the initial appointment, the counselor and student collaborate to determine the best subsequent course of action.

Counselors are also available during the day for urgent needs, usually held between 3:00 pm and 4:30 pm each day. Students may call or come by to ask for daily on-call hours for urgent concerns. Varying demand for daily on-call hours means that contact with a counselor may be brief and focused on immediate problem solving only.

Counselors are available to consult with you about the concerns you may have in dealing with a particular student or student issues.

The Counseling Center web page has information about the center, its services, and the staff. There are also links to some excellent self-help resources.

www.ithaca.edu/sacl/counseling

If you have an emergency after business hours, call the Office of Public Safety for assistance, 607-274-3333 from your cell phone (or 911 from an on-campus phone).