

Counseling Services
University Health, Counseling & Disability Access Services
131 Millennium Student Center
(314) 516-5711

Making A Referral To Counseling
How Can We Help?

Personal Counseling / Crisis Intervention / Consultation To Faculty & Staff /
Assessment And Referral / Presentations And Workshops

Helping and referring the distressed student

As a member of the UMSL faculty or staff, you will at times encounter students who are in psychological distress. In some cases, you will be able to serve as a valuable resource by simply talking with the student about his/her concerns. However, there may be occasions when you will want to refer a student to a professional counselor for assistance. Counseling psychologists are available to consult with you about ways to help a student in distress, or to assist you in making an effective referral to counseling.

EMERGENCIES

If you are with someone who is in an immediate crisis, it may be helpful to call Counseling (x5711) and then, if possible, walk with the person to Counseling Services' office at 131 Millennium Student Center (located to the left of The Nosh cafeteria, near Disability Access Services). In cases when it would be difficult for the person to walk to Counseling Services, we can arrange to come to your office.

If the situation is an immediate emergency, it would be best to call **Campus Police at (314) 516-5155**. If the person appears to be suicidal or homicidal, do not leave the person alone. Call Counseling Services or Campus Police to guide you through emergency procedures.

If the person is not dangerous, but is creating a disruption in the classroom or elsewhere on campus, please call the office of Student Affairs at x5211. (This is an important step, even if you are also calling Counseling about potential mental health issues.)

When to refer someone to counseling

1. If you are concerned that the student is self-destructive, suicidal, dangerous to others, severely depressed, or out of contact with reality.
2. If the student has experienced a number of other problems or symptoms over an extended period of time.
3. If you have had contact with the student on several occasions and it appears that the student is unable to find a way to feel better or to make changes in his/her life.
4. If you are starting to feel burdened or overwhelmed by the student's personal needs.
5. Some of the specific issues for which counseling may be helpful:
 - Depression and/or suicidal thoughts
 - Interpersonal/social problems
 - Self confidence or identity issues
 - Death of a family member or close friend
 - Stress and anxiety (including test anxiety)
 - Anger, aggression, resentment
 - Time management, difficulty concentrating, low motivation

How to make a referral

As the referring individual, you are the first step in the counseling process. Your approach towards the student and your attitude about counseling is of major importance. Many first-time clients have strong apprehensions about counseling. You may be able to help ease these apprehensions. The following steps can be useful in making a referral:

1. Give your reason for making the referral. Describe to the student the behaviors that concern you. It's often helpful to note the magnitude and duration of these behaviors.

For example, "I'm concerned about you because you've been very withdrawn and unusually quiet in class for the past three weeks," or, "From what you've been telling me, you seem to be experiencing a lot of distress this semester."

2. Recommend that the student come to Counseling. For example, "You have talked several times about this and seems that things aren't getting better for you. I think it might be helpful for you to talk with a counselor who can offer you a fresh perspective."
3. Ask for feedback from the student. Find out how he/she feels about the idea of going to counseling. If the student responds negatively, listen for the reasons. Being referred for counseling can have many different meanings to the student. For example:
 - Is the student afraid you think they are "crazy"?
 - Has the student had a bad experience with therapy in the past?
 - Is the student concerned about what friends or family members will think of them?
 - Is the student concerned that counseling will go on his/her academic record?
 - Does he/she feel counseling indicates a "weakness"?
4. Reassure them about counseling. You may want to give some reassurance that a person doesn't have to be "crazy" to use Counseling Services. Counselors see many people who can use some help with normal "problems in living," such as making an important decision about the future or coping with a situational crisis. Having the courage to face one's problems in counseling involves strength, not weakness. You might also mention that whatever is said to a counselor will be HELD IN CONFIDENCE and not be on their academic record.
5. Recommend that the student set up an appointment soon by calling Counseling Services at x5711. It is important that the student (or you) let the receptionist know if this is an EMERGENCY. In some situations, you may want to urge the student to call from your office. In an emergency, you can walk a student to Counseling Services' office at 131 Millennium Student Center. Whether you walk with the student or not, you can facilitate the process by calling ahead and letting the receptionist know there is need for an emergency appointment. Our staff will also go

to your office in an emergency, when the student is unable to come to us.

6. Follow up with the student to see if he/she kept his/her appointment. Recognize, however, that a student may not want to discuss the counseling experience and that the Counseling Services' staff must carefully guard the confidentiality of all client contacts.

We can help you decide whether and how to make a referral!

If you have questions about this referral process, please give us a call at x5711.