Introduction

As a member of the Oklahoma State University faculty, staff, or as a teaching assistant, you will at some time encounter a student in distress. Your role as a possible helper is not only valuable, it can be crucial. In most cases, you will be able to respond effectively to student needs; however, there might be occasions when you want to refer a student to someone else for assistance.

This booklet is offered to help you recognize signs of student distress and suggest basic guidelines for effective interventions. However, each student presents a unique situation. If you are concerned about a student’s behavior and/or health, it is always wise to seek consultation with a professional.

The Student Counseling Center, Student Disability Services, and Student Judicial Affairs are examples of offices prepared to respond to your questions should you need additional help in assisting a student, or in making an appropriate referral.

A directory of campus referral sources for the most frequently encountered student problems can be found at the back of this publication. A website containing faculty and advisor resources may be found at http://www.okstate.edu/ucs/resources.html.

Signs and Symptoms of Student Distress

- Excessive procrastination or very poorly prepared work, especially if inconsistent with previous work
- Dependency (e.g., a student who hangs around or makes excessive appointments)
- Listlessness, lack of energy, or falling asleep
- Poor attendance in class or at work
- Marked changes in personal hygiene, appearance, or behavior.
- Isolation from others
- Repeated requests for special consideration such as deadline extensions or examination deferrals
- Impaired speech or garbled, disjointed thoughts
- Low self-esteem
- Threat of harming others
- Behavior that regularly interferes with the decorum or effective management of class
- Overtly suicidal statements (i.e., referring to suicide as a current option)
- High levels of irritability
- Inability to make decisions, despite your repeated attempts to clarify and encourage
- Alcohol or other drug abuse
- Dramatic weight loss or weight gain
- Bizarre or strange behavior obviously inappropriate to the situation (e.g., talking to “invisible” people)
- Emotions (e.g., fearfulness, tearfulness, or nervousness) displayed to an extreme degree or for prolonged periods

Guidelines for Interaction

- Talk with the student privately
- Listen carefully
- Show concern and interest
- For clarification, repeat to the student what you inferred they told you
- Avoid criticizing or judging
- Consider the Student Counseling Center as a resource and discuss referral with the student
- If the student resists help and you are worried, contact the Student Counseling Center to discuss your concerns
- Involve yourself only to the extent that you feel comfortable; extending yourself can be a gratifying experience when kept within your range of comfort

Making a Referral to the Student Counseling Center

- Suggest that the student make an appointment for counseling. Provide the phone number and location of the Student Counseling Center to the student.
- If the student is willing, you may call the receptionist at the Student Counseling Center while the student is in your office and then hand the phone to the student to arrange the appointment date and time. Write
down the Student Counseling Center location and phone number for the student.

- In an emergency, follow the above procedure, but tell the receptionist that you have a student with you that needs an “emergency appointment.” Except on rare occasions, the student may be seen shortly after your call.
- Sometimes it is useful or necessary to walk a student to the Student Counseling Center or other campus referral agency.
- Follow-up with the student by inquiring as to whether s/he kept the appointment and how the session went.

**Thoughts about Follow-Up and Confidentiality Procedures**

Students can be assured that counseling sessions with Student Counseling Center staff are confidential. We understand that you might be interested in the progress of a student you referred. However, our ability to share information about a student is governed by confidentiality laws and ethics.

**We can**

- Answer questions about steps in referring students to the Student Counseling Center
- Offer information about psychological concerns and problems in general

**We cannot**

- Say whether a student is being seen or has kept an appointment
- Discuss the content of sessions
- Discuss treatment plans or progress

In some cases, a student may find it in his/her best interest for information to be shared with a faculty, staff, family member, or significant other. This is done with the student’s written authorization that includes a clear explanation of the purpose and content of the disclosure. An exception would be a counselor's determination of imminent danger to the student or others.

**Reasons for Referral Failure**

Upon occasion, despite good intentions and accurate knowledge of resources, a referral for counseling is not successful. Before you judge yourself, the student, or the referral source too harshly, consider the following possibilities.
The student may not have been ready to receive the kind of help offered. Readiness is an essential component of receiving help.

There may have been a disparity between the student’s expectations and the actual nature and extent of help provided by the referral source.

The referral source may have been inappropriate for the type of help needed.

The referral source may not have been aware of the student’s actual needs due to misunderstanding, misinformation, or poor communication.

**Follow-Up on an Unsuccessful Referral**

- If a referral proves unsuccessful, you can take several steps. Continue to be receptive to the student, try to determine the reason for the referral failure, and once again, explore options with the student.
- If disparity or inappropriateness is the problem, try to clarify the student's needs and expectations, and investigate more thoroughly the nature of the help offered by the referral source. Then try again!
- If lack of awareness on the part of the referral source is the problem, with the student’s permission, make direct contact with the referral source to correct or provide information about the student’s needs.
- If incompatibility is the problem, encourage the student to try another person or agency. If you feel comfortable, provide a specific name of an individual for referral.
- If lack of readiness is the problem, accept the student’s feelings, but communicate your limitations and encourage the student to consider other options for assistance. It is possible that later or under different circumstances, the student will be more receptive.

**Student Counseling Center**

The Student Counseling Center is located in 316 Student Union (744-5472). Office hours are 8:00 am -- noon and 1:00 -- 5:00 pm, weekdays. An on-duty counselor is available during these times and available for consultation with you. A counselor is also on call after hours and may be reached through the OSU Police (744-6523). The Student Counseling Center offers the following services.

- Crisis intervention
- Short-term individual counseling
- Counseling groups
- Outreach programs
- Consultation
- Referral
**REFERRAL DIRECTORY**

The directory is divided into two sections: Expressed Concern and Suggested Referral Resource. Locate the student’s concern in the first column, and then refer to the suggested resources listed numerically in the second column.

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Withdrawing from school .................................................. 28, 40
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OSU Referral Sources

Academic Advising & Assistance

1. Academic Affairs 744-5627
   101 Whitehurst

2. ADA Compliance 744-7116
   315 Student Union

3. Admissions Office 744-5358
   219 Student Union

4. Agricultural Student Services 744-5395
   136 Agriculture

5. Arts and Sciences Student Services 744-5658
   202 Life Sciences East

6. Business Student Services 744-5069
   201L Business

7. Career Resource Center 744-6434
   (career information and study skills)
   308 Student Union

8. Education Student Services 744-6350
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**Personal & Career Assistance**

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|     | 408 Whitehurst                                          |          |
| 19. | Employee Assistance Program                             | 744-6415 |
|     | 103 Wellness Center                                     |          |
| 20. | Family Resource Center                                  | 744-6539 |
|     | 719 North Walnut                                        |          |
| 21. | Center for Family Services                              | 744-5058 |
|     | 101 Human Environmental Sciences West                   |          |
| 22. | Counseling Psychology Clinic                            | 744-6980 |
|     | 408 Willard Hall                                         |          |
23. Psychological Services Center  
   118 North Murray  
   744-5975

24. Public Safety--OSU Police Department  
   104 USDA Building  
   744-6523

25. Student Judicial Affairs  
   326 Student Union  
   744-5470

26. University Health Services  
   1202 West Farm Road  
   744-7665

27. Student Counseling Center  
   316 Student Union  
   744-5472

28. Alcohol and Substance Abuse Center  
   336 Student Union  
   744-2818

29. Rinda Starr-Alsip  
   201 Whitehurst  
   744-5328

Financial & Employment Assistance

30. Office of the Bursar  
    113 Student Union  
    744-5993

31. Career Services (www.hireosugrads.com)  
    (job search and employment)  
    360 Student Union  
    744-5253

32. Scholarships and Financial Aid  
    119 Student Union  
    744-6604

Student Activities & Wellness

33. Campus Life  
    060 Student Union  
    744-5488

34. Colvin Center/Campus Recreation  
    102 Colvin Center  
    744-5510

35. Fraternity and Sorority Affairs  
    050 Student Union  
    744-5490
36. Parking and Transit Services 744-6525
   104 USDA Building

37. Residential Life 744-5592
   Iba Hall

38. Student Government Association 744-6500
   040 Student Union

39. Vice President for Student Affairs 744-5328
   201 Whitehurst

40. Seretean Wellness Center 744-9355
   1514 West Hall of Fame

Tutoring & Academic Success Assistance

41. Academic911 (web resource for academic success)
   http://academic911.okstate.edu/

42. Tutoring (compilation of campus-wide tutoring services)
   http://www.okstate.edu/ucs/tutoring.html

FOR CAMPUS EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE
— POLICE, FIRE, AMBULANCE OR INTERVENTION —
CALL 911
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