

From the Counseling Center website: <http://www.ecu.edu/cs-studentaffairs/counselingcenter/facultystaff.cfm>

## **Introduction**

The purpose of this section is to assist faculty members in their efforts to enhance the educational and personal achievements of students. Included is information about ways in which the Center for Counseling and Student Development might lend assistance. Suggestions are offered regarding the most effective ways to refer students for help.

Most students experience significant changes in their lives while in college. They may leave their homes, communities, and even familiar cultures to come to East Carolina University and live somewhat independently, often for the first time. All students must manage the special challenges of academic life. Undergraduate students typically confront important educational, career, and personal decisions while developing a personal identity that marks their maturation from adolescents to young adults. Returning adult students often have to cope with the competing demands of family, work and college. Graduate students may experience stress from all of these sources. Under such difficult circumstances, students may seek the assistance of others.

While many students handle these transitions by themselves or with family and friends, a growing number want or need help beyond what their support systems provide. For many years at the Center we have seen a steady demand from students for counseling services. There is also evidence to suggest that non-traditional students and those belonging to racial and ethnic minorities may have unique difficulties in adjusting to University life. For these students, counseling services may be especially helpful.

The number of requests for consultation from faculty members has increased dramatically over the past several years. The Center welcomes this concern from faculty members for the well-being of the students and offers the following information for guidance.

### **What is the role of faculty in assisting students who have problems?**

The stress of academic, social, family, work, and/or financial concerns are often interrelated and may result in a student turning to faculty members for help. In fact, anyone who is perceived as knowledgeable, caring, and trustworthy may be a potential resource in times of trouble. Faculty members are often in a good position to identify students who are troubled. Timely expressions of interest and concern may be critical factors in helping students solve problems that are interfering with academic survival and success.

### **When to refer?**

Not every student needs professional counseling. Sometimes simply listening and offering encouragement and empathy can help a student feel understood. If you want to let a student know that his or her concerns are normal and expected, be sure not to minimize the problems

in doing so. What is a simple solution in your view may be harder to imagine for another person.

If distressing circumstances are affecting a student's well-being or ability to make satisfactory academic progress, a referral for counseling may be in order. Referrals are usually indicated in the following situations:

- A student presents a problem or requests information, which is outside your range of knowledge;
- You feel that personality differences, which cannot be resolved between you and the student, will interfere with your efforts to help the student;
- The problem is personal, and you know the student on other than a professional basis (friend, neighbor, relative, etc.);
- A student is reluctant to discuss a problem with you for some reason;
- You do not believe your speaking with the student has been effective.

### **How to refer?**

When a faculty member determines that a student might benefit from professional counseling, it is usually best that the student be spoken to in a direct, straightforward fashion in which concern for his or her welfare is shown. It is recommended that faculty make it clear that this suggestion represents his/her best judgment based on observations of the student's behavior. Specific feedback about behaviors of concern is recommended. Above all, it is not advisable to attempt to deceive or trick the student into seeking counseling.

Except in emergencies, the option must be left open for the student to accept or refuse counseling. If the student is skeptical or reluctant, 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 or 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.

If the student agrees to the referral, they may call the Center for Counseling and Student Development (328-6661) to make an appointment. Faculty and staff members, friends or parents cannot make appointments on behalf of the student. The student's first contact with the Center will be a screening interview in which the student and the intake counselor make decisions about the type of help needed. Intake appointments are usually scheduled within a day or two of the student's request to be seen at the Center. Students requiring immediate help are seen on an emergency basis. You should follow up with the student at a later date to show your continued interest even if he or she did not accept your attempted referral.

### **What about confidentiality?**

It is important for members of the University community to understand that the interviews conducted at the Center are confidential in nature. Information about those interviews or the

content of such interviews cannot be released except upon a student's written request, in circumstances which would result in clear danger to the individual or others, or as may be required by law. The Center for Counseling and Student Development adheres very strictly to this policy. Please see our formal statement on confidentiality listed in the column of options on the left side of this page.

If a faculty member is interested in a student's contact with the Center, information can best be obtained directly from the student. It should be noted that students are not bound by the same promises of confidentiality that professional psychologists are obliged to keep.

In some instances, a student may want the Center to share certain information with a faculty member. This can be done by the student giving the Center a written authorization, which specifies the purpose and the content of such a disclosure.

### **Eligibility for services.**

All students are eligible for psychological counseling and/or psychiatric services. Both the counseling and psychiatric services of the Center are intended to provide short-term assistance to students in dealing with personal and educational concerns, which may be barriers to their academic progress.

After an initial assessment of a student's concerns, the psychologists and/or psychiatrists will determine if an individual's needs may best be met by the Center's services or are beyond the scope of those services. In the latter cases, such individuals will receive a referral to other sources of assistance, on or off-campus.

### **Are counseling services available to faculty and/or staff?**

The Center for Counseling and Student Development does not provide on going counseling services for University employees. However, if an employee is in crisis a professional staff member will meet with the employee one time to assess a concern or problem and make an appropriate referral to another source of help.

An Employee Assistance Program is available that includes confidential assessments, and referrals for employees who work a minimum of 30 hours/week.

Carolina Centre: 252-757-0123

ECU Family Therapy Clinic: 252-737-1415

To locate a medical provider through BCBSNC: [www.bcbsnc.com](http://www.bcbsnc.com)

Additional resources via OSP: <http://www.osp.state.nc.us/eap/Providers2.htm>

For more information on these resources, employees can contact 252-328-9848

