

## **FACULTY/STAFF ROLE**

While many students seek mental health services on their own, often faculty, teaching assistants and university staff are the first to recognize that the student is not functioning well, academically or emotionally. Students may turn to you because they know you and respect you. While your role does not have to include “counseling” the student, you may find it to be more helpful and effective if you have some basic information about how to handle difficult situations. The UC Irvine Counseling Center is available to provide direct clinical services to students. We are also available to consult with you to help you make the best decision possible when you have concerns about a student.

## **SIGNS OF DISTRESS IN STUDENTS**

The college years may be “the best years of one’s life.” However, especially in an academically competitive university, students may experience a great deal of stress. Many students develop emotional or personal problems which can interfere with their academic performance. Other students simply lack the personal skills to do well in school. Depression, acute anxiety, alcohol and drug abuse are not uncommon. Some students are experiencing the after effects of very traumatic or painful experiences. In your interactions with students you may hear and observe things that concern you.

Some behaviors may seem obvious and serious to you, such as:

- Coming to class under the influence of drugs or alcohol
- Marked deterioration in personal hygiene
- Expressing bizarre delusions
- Very strange or bizarre behavior

- Angry or threatening outbursts
- Talking about suicide or homicide
- Incoherence
- Other behaviors may be less obvious, such as:
  - Anxiety, nervousness, agitation, fearful look
  - Forgetfulness/difficulty concentrating
  - Low energy, sad look
  - Irritability, low frustration tolerance
  - Reports of sleeplessness
  - Reports of extreme weight gain or loss
  - Excessive procrastination and very poorly prepared work
  - Extreme dependency; e.g., the student who needs to be around you more than most other students
- Students may also talk or write about problems which worry you and for which you are not able to help them, such as:
  - Family
  - Substance abuse
  - Health
  - Finances
  - Relationships
  - Career and life planning
  - Important decisions
- Students may also send you distressing e-mails

## **WHAT IS AVAILABLE AT THE COUNSELING CENTER?**

Registered UC Irvine students are eligible for evaluation and psychotherapy services. They are typically seen first during a scheduled “initial assessment” session. At this time, their problems are explored and the intake therapist helps decide what services might be helpful and what staff person might best meet their needs. If the intake therapist determines that this is a crisis situation, appropriate steps will be taken to provide immediate care for the student. Students are eligible to eight individual sessions and an unlimited number of group therapy sessions each academic year.

Additionally, UC Irvine students are required to have health insurance which includes benefits for mental health services. These can be accessed for short or long-term therapy.

Also, we have some low-cost community referrals available for those who want or need long-term psychotherapy.

A student in crisis can also come to the Center and a triage screening will be done on a “walk in basis.” Professional staff are available from 8am-5pm Monday through Friday to provide urgent care. The mental health professional will work with the student to form a plan for helping the student with crisis intervention and referral and follow up services, as needed.

Consultation with Counseling Center staff is available by phone or in person. If you are concerned about a student and are uncertain about what to do, phone us (824.6457), identify yourself as a faculty or staff member and say you are concerned about a student and would like to consult. Usually this service is available immediately.

## **HOW TO MAKE A REFERRAL**

If you believe it might be helpful for the student to receive therapy (or at least to be evaluated by a mental health professional), please suggest that they come to the Counseling Center. A good way to do this is to listen, to express concern for the student and then to make a referral. As you would imagine, saying “I think you need psychological help” may make the person defensive. Since most students see “stress” as a more acceptable problem, using that term in your referral usually works well. For example, you might say “From what you’ve talked about, it sounds as if you are under a lot of stress. We have people here on campus who are specially trained to help students deal with stress. I’d be willing to help you get an appointment. Is that OK?” If the student says “yes”, call the Counseling Center at 824.6457 and ask to set up an “urgent care appointment” for the student. If the student says “no” or “I’ll think about it” write down the Counseling Center telephone number and say “I hope you’ll give this a try.” You can then contact the Counseling Center if you would like to provide more information or receive further consultation.

## WHAT TO DO IN A CRISIS SITUATION

Crisis situations occur and it is helpful if you have a plan for handling them. If you believe a student is in imminent danger of killing or injuring him/herself or another person, phone the campus police immediately (on campus dial 911 or x45222, off campus dial 824.5222). Our Campus Police are well trained to handle all types of emergencies, including psychological ones. If they determine that a mental health professional is needed, they will contact us.

If you are concerned about a student but do not believe the danger is immediate or if you are unsure, please phone the Counseling Center (824.6457) and ask for a consultation with a staff member.

There may be a situation where you have a student with you and are very concerned. If you are able, walk the student over to the Center. If you are not able to walk over the student, you might ask an academic counseling staff member in your department for assistance. If you can phone first, it works best because we can have someone available to see the student soon after you arrive. You might say to the student "It seems like you are upset about this. I'd like to help you more by connecting you with people on campus who will be able to offer you additional support. Why don't I call them and set it up for you to be seen right away? Then we can walk over there together." Many faculty and staff who have done this have said they did not know how to solve the student's problem, but felt good about getting help for the student.

## SERVICES FOR FACULTY AND STAFF

Currently, the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is administered by Cascade Centers at 800.433.2320, 24/7. Faculty and staff enrolled in a medical plan may access non-emergency counseling services through their UC behavioral health plan. For more information contact: [United Behavioral Health](#) at 888.440.8225 or [Kaiser Permanente](#) at 800.900.3277. If you have questions or concerns, please contact the Associate Director of Human Resources, [John Daly](#) at 824.8311.

Because the Counseling Center is funded by Registration Fees, we do not see staff and faculty on an ongoing basis. However, as a service to the UC Irvine community we will be available in crisis situations to help assess the person's needs and make appropriate referrals. Also, staff and faculty may call to get referral information for themselves or others.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE COUNSELING CENTER

The Counseling Center staff includes clinical and counseling psychologists and doctoral interns and fellows who are well-qualified and selected from around the nation. The Center's Predoctoral Internship Program is accredited by the American Psychological Association.

The Counseling Center is located on the second floor of Student Services I, in room 203 above the Career Center, adjacent to the Cross-Cultural Center and across from the Student Center. Hours are 8:00am - 5:00pm, Monday through Friday. The telephone number is 824.6457 and there is voice mail for non-crises after hours. After hours, telephone the Campus Police (911 or x45222 or 824.5222) if there is a crisis situation. To learn more about us visit our website at [www.counseling.uci.edu](http://www.counseling.uci.edu).

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## *HELPING EMOTIONALLY DISTRESSED STUDENTS*

# UC IRVINE

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, IRVINE