A GUIDE for PENN FACULTY AND STAFF

The college years can be very stressful. Faculty and staff are often the first to witness signs of distress and are in a unique position to offer reassurance and support. CAPS staff can consult with you about the various ways to help a student in need.

ACADEMIC SIGNS OF DISTRESS
- Inability to complete work
- Missed assignments or appointments
- Repeated absences
- Continual scaling of unmet academic obligations (late papers, postponed exams)
- Worsening symptoms of pre-existing psychopathologies, isolation, irritability
- Lack of engagement in classes or labs
- Inappropriate disruptions, monopolizing classroom time

PHYSICAL OR PSYCHOLOGICAL SIGNS OF DISTRESS
- Discrimination of physical appearance or hygiene
- Visible increase or decrease in weight
- Excessive fatigue or difficulty sleeping
- Exaggerated personality traits or behaviors (irritability, withdrawal)
- Excessive use of alcohol or other drugs
- Unprovoked anger or hostility
- Irritability, constant anxiety, fearfulness
- Marked changes in concentration and motivation
- Ongoing suicidal thoughts, such as fantasizing to suicide as a current option

OTHER FACTORS TO CONSIDER
- There are situations in which problems may affect a family member or friend, break up academic failure
- Written verbal statements or threats or suicide
- Friends or classmates expressing concerns for a student

WHAT YOU CAN DO
If a student approaches you with a problem, take the time to listen respectfully and without judgment.
- Talk to the student in private with no distractions
- Give the student undivided attention, a few minutes of effective listening may help the student feel comfortable discussing what to do next
- Ask if the student has ever talked about his/her concerns with anyone else, including a counselor, if appropriate, encourage the student to talk to a professional
- Listen sensitively, in a non-threatening way
- Communicate understanding by repeating back what the student has shared
- Be direct, specific, and non-judgmental
- Refer to specific resources and mention that seeking help is a sign of strength

MAKING A REFERRAL
Do not attempt to make a referral when the student is in sport and cared that he/she cannot listen or understand. Wait until the student is calm enough to respond to your suggestions.

Support is a caring, supportive manner than the student could benefit from meeting a CAPS counselor. Provide the CAPS (215-898-7021) and encourage the student to call from your office. Offer to accompany student to CAPS if you are able.

Keep in mind, and mention if necessary:
- CAPS services are free and confidential to all Penn students, including those in graduate and professional school
- CAPS does not limit therapy sessions. Length of counseling is determined by the student and the clinician to meet the student’s needs
- Faculty and staff Do not report incidents of sexual or other crimes
- Information about CAPS cannot be construed as medical diagnosis

WHAT TO DO WHEN YOU SUSPECT A SERIOUS CRISIS
If you believe a student may be in imminent danger of harming him/herself or others, CALL Penn Police: 215-898-7133 or 911 on campus

If you need help assessing the situation, CALL CAPS: 215-898-7021 (including nights/weekends to reach a CAPS counselor on call) or accompany the student to CAPS

STUDENTS IN CRISIS
When individuals are not coping well, they may become disoriented, dysfunctional, and even attempt harm. If a student is in a serious mental health crisis, you may see or hear:
- Suicidal statements or suicide attempts
- Violent or homicidal actions, attacks, or threats (written or verbal)
- Destruction of property or other criminal acts
- Extreme anxiety, panic reactions
- Difficulty communicating (gibberish or slurred speech, disoriented thoughts)
- Loss of control with reality (seeing or hearing things that aren’t there)

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RESOURCES
- RAP Line: (Reach A Pennie 7:30 AM - 12:30 AM) 215-573-2869 (2772)
- Special Services: 215-898-6600
- Student Health Service: 215-746-3550

Weingarten Learning Resources Center: 215-573-9235

Counseling and Psychological Services
University of Pennsylvania
215-898-7021
3614 Market St, First Floor West
Philadelphia, PA 19104
www.ypl.upenn.edu/caps