

MAKING A REFERRAL TO CAPS

GOAL: To help the student obtain the best possible opportunity to deal constructively with his or her concerns.

MEANS: At times, this will mean making a referral. When making a referral, it is important to:

- 1) Referring a student for counseling is an act of caring and concern for their well-being. Remember that you want the student to know that you are committed to helping his or her find the best way to deal with the problem and that you are not "dumping him or her off onto someone else." You can assure the student of your interest by the way in which you make the referral. Since you have probably established a trusting relationship with the student, if you make the referral sensitively, you may be able to help the student "transfer this trust" to the counselor and thus facilitate the new relationship.
- 2) Remember that the most successful referrals result from a decision that is made jointly between the student and the person helping the student. You are not responsible for the choices the student makes towards helping themselves. You are hoping that your insights/perceptions will motivate the student to focus on improving their well-being.

A. **When to contact a CAPS staff member with regard to a referral:**

- 1) If you have general questions regarding a referral--whether a referral is appropriate, how to make it, etc.
- 2) If a student has consistently resisted your referral efforts.
- 3) If a student is behaving in a way that is bizarre or unusual.

B. **Some tips on how to refer a student to CAPS:**

- 1) Talk with the student about the problem. If you feel that he or she could best be helped by seeing a professional, be straightforward about conveying your honest reaction to his or her situation. *"I can support you with this, but I think that Dr. ___ or Ms. ___ at CAPS can be most helpful to you in solving this problem."*
- 2) Be specific about the problem for which you and the student think he or she needs help. For example, *"CAPS has some people who are really good at helping students improve their study skills or solve family problems,"* instead of *"I think you need counseling" or "Why don't you go over to CAPS?"*
- 3) When discussing a referral, you might suggest specific individuals at CAPS whom you think can help the student. The more you know about CAPS, the more helpful you can be because the student will realize that you are familiar with the service to which are referring him or her.
- 4) In cases where you are reasonably sure that the student wants to contact CAPS, you may expedite the process by CAPS offering the student the opportunity to telephone CAPS for an appointment while you are with him or her. However, it is important that the student does not feel that you are forcing him or her to call CAPS.
- 5) For students who plan to contact CAPS themselves, try to pin the student down to a specific

time. You might offer him or her the telephone number and say *"I'll check with you on Monday to see how your meeting went, okay?"* This will encourage the student to go ahead and make the appointment.

C. **How to refer a reluctant student to CAPS:**

- 1) Encourage the student to tell you about his expectations and perceptions of and prior experiences with CAPS or other professional counselors.
 - a. Some students view CAPS staff as professionals who deal primarily with "crazy people." They fear that going to CAPS may mean that this label will be applied to them. If this is a concern, assure the student that CAPS offers a range of services for all types of concerns from vocational and testing to major and minor personal problems.
 - b. Other students may be reluctant to seek help because they feel that situation is hopeless. In these cases, assure the student that something can be done to begin solving his or her problem.
 - c. In some cases, a student may have had a previous experience with CAPS staff member that was not satisfying. Tell the student that there are counselors at CAPS and that if they did not feel comfortable with the first person they saw, they are free to see another counselor. In addition, if the student has had a negative experience with a counselor elsewhere, encourage him or her to give it another try at CAPS.
- 2) Sometimes, self-disclosure can help break down erroneous perceptions. If you have had a satisfactory experience with the office, you may wish to share it. *"I know Dr. ___ well and find him/her very helpful and easy to talk to."*
- 3) With a particular reluctant student, you could offer to accompany the student to CAPS or to help him or her make the appointment. In a few situations, it may be helpful for the student to relieve some of his fears by talking to the CAPS staff person on the phone before the appointment.
- 4) If a student does not want to use campus resources, contact CAPS for names of other professionals in the Philadelphia area to whom to refer the student.
- 5) In addition to assisting students with local referrals when needed, staff members may also be able to make referrals in other geographic areas.

D. **How to follow up on a referral:**

- 1) After you have made a referral, it is important for you to follow up on it in order to let the student know that you will continue to be interested and concerned about him or her. Follow-up will prevent any notions the student might have that *"out of sight is out of mind."*
- 2) Ask the student how the meeting at CAPS went; however, once you are satisfied he or she has followed through, don't pry into details.
- 3) Understand that the CAPS staff member will be very careful to safeguard the student's confidentiality and will therefore not be able to give you very much feedback about the student you have referred.