Referral Process

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Two types of referrals characterize the referral process utilized by the South Texas College Counseling and Student Disability Services (CSDS). The first, internal referrals, occurs when potential students have established prior contact with a member of the faculty, administration, or staff and are directed to CSDS for assistance. Typically, the counselor to whom the student is referred will acknowledge to the referring person that the student has received requested assistance. The counselor will disclose no further information regarding the relationship between student and counselor unless requested or approved in writing.

The referral process also includes external referrals of student by CSDS to other agencies or professionals outside South Texas College. Referrals are made only after students are informed of the process and have given their consent for the referral. In such instances, students assume financial responsibility for continuing treatment outside South Texas College.

Faculty Involvement
Faculty members who interact daily with students are clearly in the most advantageous position to observe changes in academic performance behavior, as well as initial outward signs of personal stress.

Awareness of the more visible indicators of distress can be helpful to faculty, supervisors and colleagues in making referrals to CSDS. If you encounter a student experiencing a crisis, there is set of helpful responses which generally will assist them as they attempt to cope with personal difficulties and stressful situations.

1. Be clear about your willingness to assist the student and convey to the student the extent and limits of your ability to help.
2. The fact that a student has approached you is an indication of their trust in you. Appreciate the real importance of your role because you may be the first person in whom they have confided.

Deciding to Refer
Even though the decision to refer is a difficult one, there is no clear formula which is appropriate for all situations. Generally, it is better to err on the side of caution than not.

A referral is usually appropriate when:

1. A student presents a problem or requests information which is beyond your scope of knowledge, competency, or interest.
2. The problem is personal and your relationship to the student is limited only to professional/academic interactions.
3. The student addresses a problem, but is reluctant to discuss it further with you.
4. You feel uncomfortable dealing with the issues raised by the student.

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Behavioral Signs for Potential Referrals

Students in potential need of counseling may make direct or indirect requests for help. Indirect requests are more difficult to read, for they tend to be hidden among a variety of stated concerns or potentially problematic behaviors. For example, students may bring issues of an academic nature or specific work-related problems to a member of the faculty, administration, or staff. They often do so because those problems seem to be more acceptable and appropriate as a means of establishing initial contact. At times, the presenting issues hide, or delay discussion of real problems. Willingness on your part to discuss and explore issues beyond those initially presented by students is critical in establishing a meaningful helping relationship. The following is a list of behaviors which might indicate that a student might benefit from a referral to CSDS. It should be noted, however, that it is more useful to look for clusters or combinations of indicators before making referrals. The following list is provided to serve as a guide for assessing coping patterns and, as such, is not thorough.

1. Problems with concentration, memory, attentive skills.
2. Loss of interest in schoolwork, employment, social activities, absence from class, tardiness, increasingly poor time management.
3. Feelings of guilt, worthlessness, self-recrimination, personal inadequacy.
5. Poor study habits, sudden and acute performance anxieties.
6. Dissatisfaction with academic major.
7. Unrealistic expectations/confusion regarding personal and career goals.
8. Expressed difficulties in family and/or marital relationships.
9. Expressed concerns regarding death (or divorce/separation) of family members or close friend.
10. Marked withdrawal, unwillingness to communicate.
11. Problems with interpersonal relations, especially in dating or intimacy situations.
12. Irrational worrying, excessive fears.
13. Loss of appetite, sleep disorder, lack of stamina, persistent fatigue.
14. Undue concern with physical health.
15. Indications of increased/excessive drinking or drug use.
16. Unexplained crying and/or seemingly impulsive outbursts of anger.
17. Acute increase in activity levels (excessive talking and rambling, physical restiveness, hyperactivity).
18. Unusual or frequent irritability, suspiciousness, irrational feelings of being persecuted or slandered.
19. Thought disorders (bizarre conversation or written communications).

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How to Refer

When you have made the choice to refer a student to CSDS, present your recommendation in a direct and straight-forward manner. Never trick or deceive by masking your intentions. It is very important that the potential student be aware of your specific concerns and why you feel a referral to CSDS is warranted. Sharing facts regarding the services available in the CSDS can also ease the process of referral. Students will also be helped to overcome the stigma attached to the counseling process if they understand that all information is confidential and that no information will be released without their prior consent. The additional fact that such services are free should also facilitate the referral process.

Except in crisis situations, the student should be given the option of accepting or rejecting recommended referrals. If the potential student initially appears resistant to a referral, faculty members, administration, or staff should provide an opportunity to vent feelings and suggest that the possibility of a referral can be discussed at a later date, when more thought has been given to it. It is important not to rush or pressure the potential student into referrals. A premature, or forced, referral (except when confronted with an emergency situation) may make it virtually impossible to seek help in the future. If a student accepts the need for a referral, the following steps should be considered:

With the student present, call CSDS and make an appointment.

1. If given approval to do so, provide information to the counselor about the nature of the referral.
2. If the initial attempt at referral cannot be completed due to schedule conflicts, the referral should be made with the first available counselor.
3. In the event of an emergency, CSDS will make every effort to provide an immediate and direct response to the request for assistance.
4. Follow up after the referral has been completed to demonstrate continued interest in student’s welfare.
5. Having the student call for an appointment increases his/her responsibility and commitment to using counseling services. There are times, however, when it is more appropriate to call and to make an appointment on behalf of the student.

If a student is in a crisis, you need not submit the referral form but instead come directly to the CSDS. In the event a student is at an immediate risk of harming themselves or someone else, South Texas College Department of Public Safety should be contacted (956-872-2589). Clearly state to South Texas College Department of Public Safety that you need immediate assistance, give your name, your location and state the nature of the problem. It is best to have another South Texas College employee accompany you and the student while you wait for South Texas College Department of Public Safety to respond.

When we become aware of a potential or actual crisis, we attempt to respond immediately. If the student is in our office, we assess their risk for harm, inquire about their support and connect them with resources to ensure their needs are addressed. This may involve contacting their parents or other relevant supportive services. Appropriate follow-up care is then arranged. Our objective is to strategize with the student by proactively securing their safety. We recognize the challenge of respecting students’ legal rights as an adult while also appropriating our professional responsibility to help keep them safe.

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In summary:

Once you judge that a student is at risk, you will:

1. Either refer them to the CSDS,
2. Call the CSDS to consult (956-872-2530 or 956-872-2140), or

If you judge the student is at an immediate risk to harm:

1. Call Campus Safety (956-872-2589)
2. Have a colleague accompany you while you wait for the South Texas College Department of Public Safety to respond.
Please fill out completely.

Date: ____________________________

Student Information:

Name: ______________________________ A#: ____________________________
Address: ____________________________ Phone No: ______________________

Campus:  
- [ ] Mid-Valley  
- [ ] Nursing & Allied Health  
- [ ] Pecan  
- [ ] Starr Co.  
- [ ] Technology

Reason for referral:

- [ ] Personal/Family Concerns  
- [ ] Disability Concerns/Assessment  
- [ ] Academic Difficulties  
- [ ] Career Exploration  
- [ ] Transfer/Transition Services  
- [ ] Other: (please specify) ___________
- [ ] Title IX/Pregnant & Parenting Services

Referred by:

Name: ______________________________ Department: ______________________
Phone number (s): ____________________________ Campus: ______________________

________________________________________________
Faculty/ Staff Signature Date

By signing below student acknowledges that a referral was made to Counseling and Student Disability Services.

________________________________________  ____________________________
Student Signature Date

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