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## *College Community Guide to Counseling Services*

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Counseling Center

Administration Building, 6th Floor, Room 620

570.208.5873

Office Hours: 8:30am-4:30pm Monday through Friday

## **College Community Guide to Counseling Services**

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**Purpose of this Guide**

College is a challenging time. With deadlines to meet, relationships to build, and a career to plan, it can seem like a lot to juggle. King's College's Counseling Center assists students in finding solutions to life's challenges by helping them manage stress and anxiety, learn new ways to deal with difficult situations, improve moods, mend relationships, and live better lives, among other things.

The purpose of this publication is to assist faculty and staff in their efforts to enhance the educational and personal achievements of King's College students by providing some information about situations or circumstances in which counseling services may be helpful or advised.

The information within explains when professional counseling might be beneficial to an individual and how to make a referral to Counseling Services. You will find some common concerns that students often seek support for and a discussion of how to assist students immediately in distress, who need further assistance, and how to gauge what is an urgent situation.

Throughout, the concept of professional confidentiality as it applies to campus and information about referral and consultation services are also discussed.

You will also find specific information about what to do in emergency circumstances.

**Mission Statement**

*The Counseling Center is deeply committed to helping our students develop person—academically, spiritually, personally, socially, and ethically. This is accomplished, with short-term individual, group psychotherapy sessions; psychiatric consultation and related psychopharmacology; assessment and evaluation; drug and alcohol programs; crisis and emergency intervention; outreach, educational training, peer education, and consultation programs for students, faculty and staff.*

If you would like to make a report of concern to the Counseling Center you can do so by sending information to: [counselingcenterstaff@kings.edu](mailto:counselingcenterstaff@kings.edu)

### **Services Offered in the Counseling Center**

The services offered in the King's College Counseling Center fall into 3 basic service offerings:

#### ***1. Counseling***

During the academic semesters our primary function is to offer one-to-one counseling sessions to our students. Typically, sessions are approximately 45 minutes in duration and the meeting frequency is tailored to each individual student's needs. All of our services are offered by licensed mental health professionals that are educated, experienced, and trained in the areas most often occurring in the lives of our students.

#### ***2. Education***

Through various outreach methods including presentations, our HOPE Peer Education program, and events on campus we offer information and advocate for mental health matters.

#### ***3. Consultation***

Many times, situations arise regarding students that present a challenge or unrest in a faculty or staff member. You do not have to feel alone or confused though or not unsure of what to do or how to handle the scenario. In these times we encourage you to consult with a counselor in the Counseling Center. We can go over the situation and develop a plan or direction on how to proceed.

Some additional and helpful information about Counseling Center services:

#### ***Cost***

Our services are included in the tuition of our students and no additional costs are to be expected.

***Population Served***

All currently enrolled undergraduate students can utilize the services offered in the Counseling Center. Physician Assistant students are an exception to the rule and can use services in the Counseling Center throughout their program, as the program runs a unique schedule. If you wonder if you are eligible for services or have any questions, please contact us and we can certainly talk more about this.

***Confidentiality***

All aspects of your participation in counseling at the Counseling Center, including the scheduling of appointments, content of counseling sessions, records, and outcomes of counseling, are kept private and are protected by law. Licensed mental health professionals provide services to enrolled King's College students with respect for the diverse backgrounds, dignity, and worth of everyone, in a confidential and supportive manner. Please know, counseling records are separate from academic or administrative records at King's College.

There are specific legal limits to confidentiality such as:

- Evidence of clear and imminent danger of harm to self or others which may require your counselor to report this information to the local or campus authorities to ensure the safety of yourself or others.
- Pennsylvania state law requires the mandatory and immediate reporting of any information pertaining to the possible physical or sexual abuse of any person under 18 years of age or in the case of elder abuse.
- A court order, issued by a judge, may require the releasing of information contained in Counseling Center records or may require a counselor to testify in a court hearing. [This exception does not include judicial hearings held within the College.]

## What to Look For: Signs of Needing to Refer to the Counseling Center

A lot of times someone sees some behaviors or traits in a student and wonders if they should do anything further. Below are some areas that may warrant a need to refer to the Counseling Center to get a student additional assistance and support.

- Excessive anxiety or panic
- Depression, chronic fatigue, suicidal thoughts or thoughts/ actions of self-harm
- Severe self-doubt, negative self-put downs, uncertainty about goals and direction
- Confused, disorganized, or suspicious thinking
- Bizarre or inappropriate behavior and/or appearance
- Changes in personal relationships or physical appearance
- Loneliness, isolation, and/ or poor relationship skills
- Emotional outbursts
- More talkative than usual, unusual energy, decreased need for sleep
- Confusion regarding sexual behavior and identity
- Perfectionistic behavior and overwhelming test anxiety
- Problems with alcohol or other drugs
- Eating or body image problems
- Missing classes, responsibilities, procrastination, avoidance
- Poor academic performance or abrupt drop-off in participation
- Inability to modify tardiness in attendance/ with assignments
- Experiencing a personal loss such as a death in the family or ending of a relationship

## Urgent Situations and Emergencies

If you observe a student behaving in one or more of the below concerning ways, immediately contact Switchboard as this is an URGENT matter. Ask them to contact Office of Campus Safety and Security and the Professional On-Call (POC) and they will assess the situation and notify the Counselor On-Call (COC) for further direction.

- Talk, write about, or makes gestures about suicide directly
- Become verbally aggressive or physically violent
- Loss of contact with reality (show signs of psychosis such as responding to things only they appear to be hearing or seeing or beliefs or actions at odds with reality)
- Make direct statements/threaten to harm other people
- Unable to communicate clearly (garbled or slurred speech)

## **Differentiating Urgent Need to be Seen by a Counselor versus Needing to Make an Appointment for a Later Time**

1. If you are referring a student to the Counseling Center and there is a direct concern for the student's safety (i.e. you may be afraid they will harm themselves or someone else), please directly emphasize this concern when speaking to someone in the Counseling Center. If you talk to the Office Coordinator, please indicate this concern. If you walk a student up to the Counseling Center and our Office Coordinator doesn't happen to be at her desk and the counselors are in sessions, please knock on one of the counselor's doors.
2. If a student is in tears or visibly distressed, please also follow the above.
3. If a student is expressing struggles but no immediate threat is apparent, then please refer them for an appointment. We will do our best to see the student in a timely manner (typically within a day or two we can see new students for an initial session).

## **How to Have Difficult Discussions with Students**

*Here are some pointers on how to approach difficult, delicate, ambiguous, or emotionally charged situations with students* and how to help point them in a safe and helpful direction.

1. *Show direct eye contact and attentive behavior to the student. Speak in a clear tone with a slower pace.*
2. Speak directly to the student in a matter-of-fact fashion showing simple and concrete concern. For example, *"I've noticed your grades and attendance have been dropping. I'm concerned that something is threatening your ability to be successful."*
3. Be specific regarding the behaviors that raised your concern and avoid attributing anything to the student's personality or character. For example, *"You missed six lectures so far this quarter, three of those since you returned from break."*
4. Make a clear recommendation/ direction and make clear that it is your best judgment based on your observation of the student's behavior. For example, *"Although I'm not a counselor, my experience tells me when a student's grades go down and they aren't attending regularly, something may need to be addressed in*

*their personal life.*" Or "You have missed too many classes this semester and I think it is best that you withdraw from the course."

5. Be prepared with a plan in case the student becomes distressed (see below).

### **Ways to Help a Distressed Student**

Faculty and staff members frequently meet with students and are on the "front lines" of becoming aware of information and situations in a sometimes raw and unfiltered fashion. There are times you might encounter a student that is distressed emotionally for various reasons. Below are some ways that you might approach this situation. The below list are suggestions and are not in any particular order.

1. There is no perfect way to handle these situations. Try your best to maintain calmness and enlist the help of those that may further assist where possible.
2. Maintain gentle eye contact with the student. Though you may feel revved up inside, try your best to remain calm.
3. Gently ask questions that come to your mind. The questions may or may not be related to the cause of the distress. The objective is to get the person to slowly open-up more. It may also help you to figure out what the student needs further.
  - a. Urge them to talk more directly. You might say "Can you tell me more about what has you upset?"
  - b. Ask them "Is anything that they need right now?" or "How can I help you?"
4. Perhaps offer to get the student some water. They may accept or decline but you are giving them some empowerment and control by being able to make a simple choice. It might also afford you the opportunity to excuse yourself briefly and signal to someone to get you further assistance.
5. Refrain from leaving the student alone if you can help it.
6. As soon as you can, contact Switchboard and notify them to send the Professional On-Call (POC), telling them that you have a distressed student in need of assistance.
7. Listen without being judgmental and do not interrupt when they are talking. Encourage them to talk openly. Talking may reduce distress and help the person see things in a different or clearer perspective.
8. Ask the student if there is someone that they would like to talk to or if they can help to get someone. Sometimes a student may name another student, friend, or roommate here. Though it does potentially put a strain on this other student,

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- many times they are involved or aware already and are more than happy to offer help. The student needs trusted people at this juncture to help them feel safe.
9. Know your limits of what you can help with and offer help how you can. Connect the person with someone who can help. Offer to assist in going to or making an appointment with a counselor in the Counseling Center or accompany them to walk there.
10. Leave the option open for students to refuse counseling. For example, "The choice is yours, but I suggest speaking with a counselor may be helpful. What do you think?"
11. Follow up. Let the person know you'll be checking in to see how things turned out with what was causing them distress. It might be a good time to revisit the offering again. If the student emphatically declines, then respect the decision. For example, "As I said, the decision is yours to make. If you should change your mind, I am here to help you make contact."

### **Some Reasons Why Students Resist Referrals or Support When Offered**

When offered additional support or resources, there are times where students may not accept the help or offering. They will have many possible reasons behind that choice. Below may be a few of those reasons to be aware of.

- Don't want to "get on the radar"
- Believe they can solve it themselves
- Fear of public exposure
- Don't see the problem
- Self-Pride
- Don't know how to ask
- Don't believe they have the time
- How to Follow-Up

### **Follow-up after a Referral to the Counseling Center**

It is often the case for faculty or staff members to put a lot into helping a student accept or get to the Counseling Center. We also understand that it gives piece of mind to know that a student is indeed getting support. We appreciate this. However, due to the dynamics of confidentiality, we are not privileged to pass on information of if they did follow-through on an appointment, what was discussed, or if they rescheduled. Now if a student signs a Release of Information (ROI) to have continued discussions, that is different, and we would be able to share with you what the student has given their specific consent to share.