

Identifying Distressed Students and Making Effective Referrals Meredith College

Some behaviors often indicate that a student is experiencing emotional or psychological distress – students who experience or exhibit a number of these behaviors over a period of time should be of particular concern:

- Having difficulty in one or more areas of her life (social, academic, work, family, etc.)
- Substance abuse issues
- Marked changes in academic quality of work, missed classes, assignments, avoidance of classroom participation
- Lack of energy, falling asleep in class
- Unusual or bizarre behavior – may include excessive crying, disorganized thinking, hearing voices, suspicious behavior, etc.
- Angry outburst and unruly behavior
- Dramatic weight loss or gain
- Not taking care of herself (i.e. not showering, poor personal hygiene)
- Shows signs of severe anxiety, worrying or irritability
- Overwhelmed with life decisions (i.e. marrying, pregnancy, divorce, etc)
- Indirect or direct references to suicide or intention to harm self or another person
- Seems to have lost perspective on what is positive in her life
- In constant need of your assistance
- Having extreme difficulty in adjusting to college life
- May have experienced death of significant other, friend or family member

Suggestions for communication/interaction & making a referral

- Speak with student in private.
- Be sincere and listen carefully.
- Avoid questions that sound critical or judgmental.
- Let the student know you are concerned about her behavior or demeanor.
- Offer specific, non-judgmental descriptions of the behaviors that are concerning you.
- Try to determine if the student has a support system and is reaching out to that support system for help.
- Let the student know about resources on campus – Counseling Center, Chaplain, Academic Advising Office, Dean of Students, etc.
- Remind the student that services are free and confidential.
- Talk about the possible benefits of counseling.
- Check out the Counseling website together.
- Ask the student if you could help her make an appointment with a counselor (by phone).
- Reassure the student that it is normal to experience some problems during the college experience and seeking help is the right thing to do.
- If you do plan on contacting the counseling center or another office about your concerns about the student, let the student know you have contacted these offices.

- Follow up with the student – ask how the appointment went.
- When in doubt, feel free to consult with the Counseling Center, Dean of Students, etc.

*When you feel that a situation is urgent, feel free to walk the student to the Counseling Center (during weekday hours) or call Campus Security to ask that the Counselor on Call be contacted (during night and weekend hours).

** There is an open hour at 10:00 a.m. on Fridays at the Counseling Center for walk-in students – this may be helpful for students, or appointments can be made. There is a crisis hour at 1:00 p.m. Monday – Friday for students in crisis.

Useful Meredith College contact numbers:

Counseling Center – 760-8427

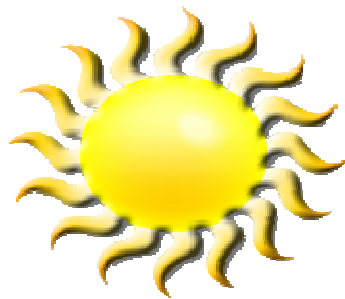
Academic Advising – 760-8059

Dean of Students – 760-8521

Campus Security – 760-8888

Health Services – 760-8535

Chaplain – 760-8346



Adapted from handout created by Beth Meier, Director of Meredith College Counseling Center. Revised by Ann Gleason, Dean of Students, in September 2007.