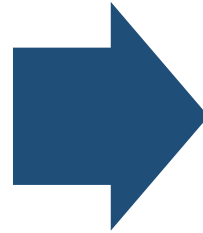


AT RISK BEHAVIORS OR URGENT CARE SITUATIONS

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR BEST PRACTICES FOR THE ACADEMIC COMMUNITY (STUDENTS, FACULTY MEMBERS, AND ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF)

INTRODUCTION

University Counseling Services (UCS) focus on promoting the psychological and physical well-being of the student population by addressing conditions of distress and psychological discomfort. They are not healthcare agencies and therefore lack the structure and functions to actively address at-risk behaviors or urgent case situations.



Nevertheless, UCS may encounter such behaviors among the student population. In these cases, UCS takes on the responsibility of providing accurate information and appropriate guidance to the entire academic community—students, faculty, and administrative staff—about the nature of these behaviors, provide best practices for their identification, and effective management to prevent and mitigate potential negative outcomes.

Terms definition

At-Risk Behavior

Any behavior that compromises physical or psychological integrity, with varying degrees of risk influenced by context-specific factors.

Urgent care behaviors:

A state marked by cognitive, emotional, or behavioral correlates where students are at imminent risk of actions that could result in severe harm, compromise their physical or psychological integrity, or pose a threat to themselves or others. The probability of such risky behaviors occurring is evaluated.

MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES NETWORK

Recommendations (non-prescriptive) addressed to professionals working in the Psychological Counseling Services and, where appropriate, the entire community to facilitate effective communication with the University Psychological Counseling Services or, in cases of moderate/high risk, with emergency services.

- Outbursts of anger, anxiety, uncontrolled crying
- Loss of interest in daily activities
- Sporadic absence from university activities
- Loss/separation from a significant person
- Mild dysfunctional eating behaviors
- Occasional use of alcohol and drugs and/or sporadic behavioral addictions (e.g., gambling, betting, others)

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- Social withdrawal
- Requent absence from university activities
- Prolonged academic lies
- Moderate dysfunctional eating behaviors
- Regular use of alcohol and drugs and/or ongoing behavioral addictions
- Self-harm behaviors (e.g., cutting, burning)
- Suicidal thoughts without specific planning

- University Psychological Counseling Service (UCS)
- University Psychotherapy Services (if available)

Local Services:
Mental Health Centers; Addiction Services- SERD; Family Counseling Centers; Anti-Violence Centers

- Imminent risk to personal or others' safety
- Situations requiring immediate intervention (e.g., suicidal/homicidal ideation with planning, violent behavior, stalking, gender-based violence, psychiatric crisis, violent behaviors)

Emergency Medical and Crisis Services (112);
Antiviolence and Antistalking Hotline (1522)

University Counseling Service for Guidance

Guidelines for Communicating with Students Exhibiting at-Risk or Urgent Care Behaviors

- Start a private conversation (without isolating the student) when both parties have time and can focus without distractions.
- Practice active listening with empathy and attention. Maintain a calm, non-confrontational attitude.
- Share your observations in a descriptive way; avoid judgements. Don't hesitate to ask directly if the student or colleague is feeling confused, sad, or distressed.
- Clearly communicate the boundaries of your role. You are not a therapist or a psychologist, but you can help in facilitating the search of a suitable mental health service.
- Example of a communication: “It looks like you’re in a bad mood and in a challenging period of your life. Some people find helpful to speak with someone who is not involved in the stressful situation. I can assist you in finding the suitable psychological support you need.”
- If the student expresses willingness to consult with an SCPA professional, provide the contact details and website address to schedule an appointment or guide them on how to access the Service.
- Encourage help-seeking rather than imposing it. Inform the student about the available University Counseling Services and reassure them that confidentiality is strictly maintained and that many students seek these services for various reasons.
- For moderate distress (where there is no immediate threat to life or safety), recommend contacting University Psychological Counseling Services by calling the provided number or visiting the website. Highlight that the service is both free and confidential.
- If you identify at-risk behaviours and the student is reluctant to engage directly, contact the University Psychological Counseling Services for advice. They can offer guidance on the suitable mental health services and recommend appropriate actions.
- In the case of at-risk or urgent care behavior, contact emergency services (112) or University security staff (if applicable), while notifying the department head and UCS.
- Keep a record of your interactions with students experiencing distress and update the Course Coordinator or your department head as needed.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FACULTY MEMBERS, STUDENTS, AND ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF

BEHAVIORS TO AVOID

- Pressuring the student into meeting if they are not open to it.
- Expressing excessive anxiety or concern.
- Assuming the role of the primary problem-solver.
- Contacting the student's family members without their explicit consent