

STUDENT SUCCESS CENTRE

Making a Referral

There are times when it is clearly not in anyone's best interest for you to try to handle a student's distress personally? Where you may not be able to give enough time; you may know that your personality differences will get in the way or you may not have the training to deal with the situation? Whatever the reason or reasons, there are times it is best to turn the problem over to someone else.

Reason for Referrals

In deciding whether to refer a student to the Student Success Centre, a number of factors may be kept in mind as possible clues to student difficulties. Obviously, inconsistent and/or erratic academic progress is a common clue that the student needs assistance. Behaviours to be aware of include:

Academic Problems

- Test anxiety and/or poor test taking strategies
- Consistent discrepancy between potential and actual achievement
- Poor time management and insufficient study habits
- Repeated absences from class with little or no work completed
- Excessive procrastination and uncharacteristically poor work – lack of motivation
- Repeated requests for special consideration
- Morbid and depressing themes on written assignments
- Anxiety, inability to concentrate
- Sudden change in attendance or performance

Advisement Problems

- Inability to choose courses or a major
- Career indecision or unrealistic career expectations
- Dissatisfaction with academic major
- Shifts in discussion from advisement on coursework to personal issues

Behavioural Problems

- A stated need for help
- Noticeable change in personal hygiene
- High levels of irritability, including unruly, aggressive, violent and/or abrasive behaviour
- Dramatic weight gain or loss
- Normal emotions that are displayed to an extreme degree or for a prolonged period of time, e.g., tearfulness or nervousness
- Frequent falling asleep in class

- Stress-related somatic complaints
- Excessive drinking, drug abuse or drug dependence
- Physical complaints
- Behaviour that regularly interferes with decorum of classroom

Interpersonal Problems

- Sudden distancing from faculty or other students
- Dependency on advisor/ "Hanging around"
- Traumatic changes in personal relationships due to loss or death
- Relationship (family/parent, friendship, roommate, single parent adjustment) problems
- Identity and acculturation issues
- Personal loss and grief reactions
- Harassment issues
- Adjustment: loneliness, shyness, homesickness
- Stress management: academic, emotional, physical
- Self-confidence issues

Emergency Situations When You Should Get Help Immediately:

- Highly disruptive behaviours, hostility, aggressiveness, violence, etc.
- Inability to communicate clearly (garbled, slurred speech, unconnected or disjointed thoughts).
- Loss of contact with reality such as seeing or hearing things that aren't there, beliefs or actions that are greatly at odds with reality or probability.
- Suicidal thoughts that are immediate, including plans and/or methods.
- Homicidal thoughts.

Be frank with the student about your limitations and ability to help. Most will understand that you don't have the time or training, or simply that this is not what your job is. It means a lot to them, though, that you care enough to try to help them. You can also be invaluable in dispelling some of the stereotypes that surround the idea of counselling.

How to Make a Referral

Here are a few ways in which you can make a referral to the Student Success Centre:

1. If a person's life is at risk call 911, then call the Student Success Centre at 403-782-3381 ext. 4141.
2. Talk with the student about the services the Student Success Centre offers and how these might relate to his/her specific concern.
3. Express your concern for the student's welfare. Ask the student if they are talking to anyone about the concern discussed. If the student is not currently getting counselling, it is best that you express your concern and recommendation directly to the student as a suggestion and allow the student to make their own decision. You may also express that the Student Success Centre staff has seen many students over the years with feelings and problems similar to theirs, and that we can help them work things out.
4. Do not attempt to deceive or trick the student into seeking counselling. Create a positive expectation.
5. Make it clear that your recommendation for the student to seek counselling represents your best judgment based on your assessment of his/her particular problem(s). Be specific regarding the behaviours that have raised your concerns, and avoid making generalizations about the individual.
6. You can call and make an appointment for the student. This is usually best done while they are still with you and you can work out a mutually agreeable time for an appointment.
7. You can come to the Student Success Centre with the student, while he or she sets up the appointment. This tends to be the most successful type of referral, in which the student is most likely to follow up. You may even sit in on the first session if the student asks you to.
8. Client confidentiality prohibits the Student Success Centre staff from providing you with information about a student whom you have referred. However, it is appropriate for you to check back with the student to determine whether he/she has followed up on your recommendation. Even if the student did not accept your attempted referral, it will show your continued interest and concern.

Information needed to make an appointment:

Drop by the Student Success Centre at North Hall

Phone Numbers:

403-782-3381 ext 4141 or ext 4154

Office Hours:

Mon. – Thurs. 8:00 am – 5:00 pm

Fri. 8:00 am – 12:00 pm