

# **GUIDE TO MAKING A COUNSELING REFERRAL**

**AT SOME TIME, EVERY STUDENT FEELS STRESSED, ANXIOUS OR DEPRESSED.**

However, when these feelings persist over a prolonged period there may be a problem which is greater than those faced by the general student population. The following will guide you in deciding if a student should be referred to counseling.

## **WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN A TROUBLED STUDENT**

A student in crisis may:

- Be agitated or even aggressive.
- May be withdrawn or uncommunicative.
- Speak incoherently with unconnected thoughts.
- May talk about suicide or not wanting to be alive.
  - DO NOT ignore such talk.

## **WHAT TO DO FOR A STUDENT IN CRISIS**

**IF AGGRESSIVE OR HOSTILE –**

- Call 911 (University Police)
- Stay safe by whatever means necessary.

**IF THE STUDENT IS SUICIDAL, UNCOMMUNICATIVE, OR INCOHERENT –**

- Do not leave the student alone.
- Contact the University Police at 911.
- Stay with the student until help arrives.
- Reassure the student.
- Be calm, maintain eye contact and listen nonjudgmentally.

## **WHAT TO DO FOR A STUDENT WHO IS UPSET, BUT NOT SUICIDAL, VIOLENT, OR AGGRESSIVE**

- Try to get the student to tell you what is troubling them.
- Listen carefully and without judging the student.
- If the student is willing to talk to a counselor, call MU Counseling Center at 717-871-7821 and ask for an appointment to speak with a counselor.

- You may also accompany the student to the Center if this would facilitate their seeking help.

## **OTHER WARNING SIGNS FOR A STUDENT IN DISTRESS**

- Struggling academically
- Tearful
- Withdrawing from other contact with people
- Issues with hygiene or looking unkempt
- Not eating
- Lack of focus
- Depressed or anxious mood
- Increase in substance use
- Risky behavior

## **MAKING A REFERRAL TO COUNSELING CENTER**

- If possible do not hold the discussion in a public place.
- Be calm, maintain eye contact, focus on what is said without making judgments.
- Validate the student's concerns as important.
- Inform student of the free and confidential counseling services on campus.
- Offer them your phone to make an appointment or even walk with them to the Counseling Center if the need is immediate.
- If they refuse a referral, accept their decision with respect. Say something like: "Please take the telephone number and should you change your mind you can reach specially trained people who have helped many other students."
- Remind students that the Center has "Walk-in" crisis hours from 1-3pm each weekday OR they can call the Center # if emergency.
- **They can report any potentially endangering behavior, whether to themselves or others to the Behavioral Intervention Team (BIT) on the website or at 717-871-7070.**