MARS HILL UNIVERSITY
THE COUNSELING CENTER
~Mental Health & Disability Services~

UNIVERSITY STUDENTS IN DISTRESS:
RECOGNITION AND REFERRAL PROTOCOL

INDICATORS OF EMOTIONAL/PSYCHOLOGICAL DISTRESS

Students who experience or exhibit more than 3 or 4 of these behaviors over a 2-3 week period, and this behavior is a change from the student’s usual behavior, should be of particular concern:

NOTE: Obviously these behaviors or thought processes may not be visible— the observer is not expected to read the student’s mind!

- Discusses or alludes to difficulty in one or more areas of his or her life (social, academic, work, family, etc.)
- Substance abuse issues
- Marked changes in quality of academic work— misses classes and/or assignments, lack of classroom participation*
- Lack of energy, falling asleep in class
- Unusual or bizarre behavior— may include excessive crying, disorganized thinking, hearing voices, suspiciousness, etc.
- Angry outbursts and unruly behavior
- Dramatic weight loss or gain
- Not taking care of him/herself (i.e. not showering, poor personal hygiene)
- Shows signs of severe anxiety, worrying, or irritability
- Indirect or direct references to suicide or intention to harm self or another person
- Appears to have lost perspective on what is positive in his or her life. Has lost interest in satisfying or fulfilling pursuits
- In constant need of your assistance
- Has recently experienced death of significant other, friend or family member

*PLEASE report students missing more than allotted absences to the Director of Persistence/Center for Student Success.

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SUGGESTIONS FOR COMMUNICATION WITH STUDENT OF CONCERN

- Speak with student in private. Acknowledge his/her feelings, given the student’s circumstances.
- Let the student know you are concerned about his or her behavior or demeanor.
- Offer specific, non-judgmental descriptions of the behaviors that are concerning you.
- Avoid questions that sound judgmental—but be direct. If you suspect the student may be depressed enough to commit suicide, ask. Asking does not put the idea into someone’s head.
- Try to determine if the student has a support system and is reaching out to that support system for help.
- Remind the student know about resources on campus – Counseling Center, Chaplain, FYS Mentor, Student Support Services, Residence Life staff, Academic Advisor, etc.
- Remind the student that MHU Counseling Center services are free and confidential.
- Talk about the possible benefits of counseling.
- Ask the student if you could help him or her make an appointment with a counselor. Let the student know you are going to make a referral to the Counseling Center.
- 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 it seems appropriate, follow up with the student – ask how the appointment went.
- When in doubt, please consult with the Counseling Center.

REFERRING STUDENTS: If you think a situation may be urgent, feel free to walk the student to the Counseling Center during office hours or call Campus Security to ask that the Counselor be contacted when the Counseling Center is closed. If you believe the student is in imminent danger, call 911. Students who threaten suicide or who use language or behavior indicating a possible suicide attempt, or who threaten or attempt to harm others must be evaluated by a psychiatrist. Notify the Director of Counseling, Assistant Vice President for Student Development, or Security immediately, or call 911.

For non-emergencies, referral forms are on the MHU website under Counseling Center and can be completed and emailed to the Counselor.

Useful contact numbers located on page 3

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Useful Mars Hill University contact numbers:

**COUNSELING CENTER**
Cassie Pavone, Director of Counseling, ext. 1196
Judith Harris, Disability Services Coordinator, ext. 1410

**MARS HILL POLICE**
689-2301 or 911

**MY SISTER’S PLACE**
689-2446
(For rape crisis and relationship violence)

**CAMPUS SECURITY**
Kevin West, Director of Campus Safety & Security, 828.775.4079
Denise Griffin, Campus Security, ext. 1230

**MEDICAL SERVICES**
Stephanie Shelton, Director of Medical Services, ext. 1243

**CHAPLAIN’S OFFICE**
Stephanie McLeskey, Chaplain, ext. 1299
Andrew Hoots, Assistant Chaplain, ext. 1664

**CENTER FOR STUDENT SUCCESS**
Lisa Wachtman, Director of Student Persistence, ext. 1480

**STUDENT DEVELOPMENT OFFICE**
Dr. Dave Rozeboom, Vice President for Student Life ext. 1212
Dr. DeAndre Howard, Associate Vice President for Student Life ext. 1406
Sophie Poost, Administrative Assistant, ext. 1253

**TITLE IX REPORTING**
Jennie Matthews, Title IX Coordinator, ext. 1197

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