

# **Counseling Center Student Safety and Referral Protocol**

**May, 2024**

The Counseling Office provides students with an opportunity to explore their concerns and problems with a licensed clinical therapist in a confidential setting. The therapists are available to all students during the academic calendar year with no additional fees. Students may come to the counseling office with problems including interpersonal conflicts, anxiety, homesickness, family problems, depression and suicide, eating disorders, alcohol and drug issues, emotional wellness and more.

## **Individualized Risk Assessment**

Cotley College Student Wellness Center and the Counseling Office are available to provide services to all students in addition to those in crisis. The Cotley Outreach and Response Team consists of the Vice President for Student Life and Enrollment, Assistant Vice President for Academic Affairs, Director of Housing, Counselor, Student Health Office Manager, Student Disability Support and Student Success Coordinator, Financial Aid representative, Manager of Safety and Security/Clery, and International Education Coordinator. The CORT team will meet weekly. A NaBITA risk assessment/rubric will be completed. Appropriate referrals will be identified and made.

The counselor will complete an individualized risk assessment upon referral from CORT or other sources as needed. The assessment will determine current clinical status and recommendations/interventions. A determination will also be made if a mandatory external assessment is clinically appropriate to ensure the student's immediate safety.

Cottey College has an ongoing relationship with the Nevada Regional Medical Center's Behavioral Health Unit for assessment, admission, treatment, and follow-up services. An emergency may occur anytime. In some instances of severe emotional disturbance, an immediate response is necessary for the health and safety of the student or risk to others. The Counseling Office provide 24-hour emergency crisis/safety risk assessments and interventions throughout the academic year.

An emergency may include, but not be limited to the following:

- A suicidal gesture, stated intention, or attempt.
- Behavior posing a threat to the individual.
- Behavior or stated intentions posing a threat to others.
- Demonstrated inability to care for oneself.

Any reference to a personal consideration of suicide, threat of suicide, attempt at suicide, or threat to harm others will be considered as extremely serious and referral to the Counseling Office is strongly recommended. If the reference includes the how, when, where, or other specifics of suicide plans or intent to harm others, an immediate response is critical.

The Counseling Office is the primary campus resource for responding to mental health emergencies (x2157). A student who comes to the Counseling Office in crisis will be seen by a professional staff member immediately. For after-hours or weekend emergencies please contact the hall director, R.A on duty, or peer listener who will then make contact with the on-call counselor available 24/7. Hall staff and peer listeners are trained with the safety and referral response protocol.

Be prepared to provide as much information as possible, including:

- Name of the student, yourself, and your location.
- Description of the situation and the assistance needed.
- Exact location of the person.

If the student is assessed and not in imminent danger to self or others, counseling may be recommended. Parents and/or legal guardians will be contacted only if the student is in imminent danger. However, students in distress will be encouraged by the counselor to make contact with family members to broaden the student's support network. The counselor will request a signed release of authorization to contact parents/legal guardians in some situations in which the student is experiencing significant emotional distress that interferes with personal, social, and academic functioning.

If hospitalization is recommended for the student's health and safety, contact will be made with the parents or legal guardian by the counselor. The counselor will encourage the student to make this contact in the presence of the counselor. The Vice President for Student Life and Enrollment will also be notified if the student is hospitalized. The student will be asked to sign a release of information to provide authorization for whom to contact and what information to be provided. Appropriate staff and faculty will be contacted upon request with the signed release of the student.

With the student's permission, counseling staff will remain in contact during hospitalization to aid in discharge planning and continuity of care. Prior to discharge, the hospital psychiatrist and treatment team will make recommendations when the student may return to campus as a member of the academic community with no risk to self or others and with the ability to align behavior with established conduct expectations. The Vice President for Student Life and Enrollment will be notified of the student's return to campus.

Upon return to campus, the student will be recommended to participate in counseling on, or off campus as recommended by the hospital treatment team. A safety plan will be identified and implemented. The counselor will document the safety plan and assist with development of short- and long-term goals to aid in the personal, emotional and academic readjustment to campus.

### Referrals by Others

- Anyone on or off campus may make a referral to the counseling office. Consider referring a student to the Counseling Office if you notice:
  - You're doing more "personal counseling" than "academic advising" with a student.
  - A student seems to be "perpetually" tired, anxious, depressed, irritable, angry, or sad.
  - Marked changes in a student's appearance or habits (for example, deterioration in grooming, hygiene, dramatic weight change, marked withdrawal in a normally outgoing person, accelerated activity or speech in a normally reserved person, or marked change in academic attendance/performance).
  - Indications of hopelessness or helplessness.
  - A student's use of alcohol or other substances interferes with his/her relationships or work.
  - A student's thoughts or actions appear unusual to others.
  - A student makes suicidal comments.
  - A student makes threats toward others

If you notice any of these or other warning signs, please make a referral to the counseling office. Inform the student in a straightforward manner of your concern. Be

specific regarding the behavior patterns you have observed. Submit a CORT concern. If the student agrees to the referral, you may:

- Facilitate the referral by having the student call the Student Wellness Center at extension 2157 from your office or room to arrange an appointment.
- Agree that the student will contact the Student Wellness Center on their own to arrange an appointment.
- In urgent or crisis situations, walk the student over for immediate contact with Student Wellness Center staff.

Except in emergencies, the option should be left open for the student to accept or refuse a referral for counseling. If you are unsure about whether to refer, call the Student Wellness Center at extension 2157. Our staff members will consult with you about your concerns and possible options for response.

#### Potential Outcomes

Individualized assessments are provided to determine the level of risk to a student's health and safety for self or others. Assessments may be conducted through CORT, the counseling office, or external sources. A mandatory assessment by a licensed clinician on or off campus may be recommended for a student's safety.

If a student is not in imminent danger nor threat to others and chooses not to participate in counseling, staff at the Student Wellness Center will maintain periodic contact to offer supportive wellness services. Students will also be provided names and numbers of supportive resources on and off campus.

Students may contact the Vice President for Academic Affairs to request an administrative leave for health reasons.