

SERVICES OFFERED

Consultation Services for Faculty and Staff
Initial Student Interviews and Assessments
Discussion and Support Groups
Short-Term Individual Counseling
Crisis Intervention
Educational Programs and Activities
Referrals for Psychiatric Evaluation/
Medication Services
Community Resource Referrals

RESOURCE LIST

On-Campus Resources

University Health and Counseling Services	765-4328
Campus Security	765-4357
Judicial Affairs	765-4248
Residence Life	765-5558
Vice President for Student Affairs	765-4223

Off-Campus Resources

Police/Ambulance Emergency	911
Lauderdale County Sheriff	760-5757
ECM Hospital	768-9191
Lauderdale County Health Dept	764-7453
Dept of Human Resources	765-4000
Safeplace	767-6210
Rape Response	767-1100
UNA Women's Center	765-4380
Riverbend Ctr for Mental Health	764-3431

BENNETT HEALTH & WELLNESS CENTER COUNSELING SERVICES

Faculty & Staff Assisting Students in Distress



Promoting Total Lion Health

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<http://www.una.edu/counseling/>

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH
ALABAMA DIVISION OF
STUDENT AFFAIRS

RECOGNIZING DISTRESSED STUDENTS

Symptoms that persist over a period of time, may suggest that a person is experiencing problems that are beyond usual responses to life circumstances.

Marked change in academic performance/behavior

- Decline in performance or preparedness
- Excessive absences or tardiness
- Repeated requests for special consideration
- Avoiding participation or dominating discussions
- Excessive anxiety if called upon
- Disruptive behavior
- Exaggerated emotional responses that are obviously inappropriate to the situation

Unusual Behavior or Appearance

- Depressed mood or lethargy
- Hyperactivity or rapid speech
- Deterioration in personal hygiene or dress
- Dramatic weight loss or gain
- Strange or bizarre behavior/out of contact with reality

Emotional or Life Stressors

- Problems with roommates, family or partners
- Life-threatening illness or death in family or friend
- Experiencing physical or sexual assault
- Target of discrimination
- Losses in legal, financial, employment realms

References to Death/Suicide

- Feelings of helplessness or hopelessness
- Verbal or written references to suicide, homicide or threatening behavior
- Isolating from friends, family, close peers

HOW CAN YOU HELP?

Stress is to be expected as students enter their university career. Many are experiencing new demands and fulfilling additional life roles for the first time. While most students adjust and cope well, for some the pressures become overwhelming and unmanageable. The student may begin to feel alone, isolated, helpless, and even hopeless. If these feelings are not confronted and new coping skills developed, academic performance and other life roles can easily be disrupted. Often unhealthy consequences such as alcohol or other drug use or self-injurious behaviors result.

Faculty and staff members are in the unique position to identify and intervene with students in distress. This is particularly true for students who choose to not turn to family or friends. Anyone who portrays a caring and trustworthy attitude can be a potential source of support for the student. Expressions of interest and concern from a faculty or staff member may be the critical factor in helping struggling students find help and salvage their academic careers and even their lives.

The purpose of this brochure is to provide you with information on recognizing the distressed student, some specific options for intervention and referral, and to encourage you to take the time to reach out.

UNA's Student Counseling Service is a part of University Health Services. Offices are located in the Bennett Health & Wellness Center at 501 Circular Road, just below Flowers Hall. Professional staff are available to assist you when problem situations arise, and to consult with you on how best to intervene with a particular student.

What actions can you take?

The following are some suggestions that you can follow to help increase your comfort level and effectiveness when facing a distressed student.

Consult. If you are in doubt about the advisability of action on your part, call for help from an appropriate Resource before approaching the student.

Meet with the student in private. Give the student your undivided attention. Often just a few minutes of active listening by you may be enough to help the student feel cared for and more confident about what to do next. If you have initiated the contact, express your concern in non judgmental terms, describing what you have observed. For example, "I've noticed that you've been absent from class lately and I'm concerned," rather than "where have you been lately? You should be more concerned about grades!"



Listen to thoughts and feelings in a sensitive, non-threatening way. Repeat back the essence of what the student says, trying to include both content and feelings. "It sounds like you aren't accustomed to such a big campus and are feeling left out." Let the student talk.

Give hope. Assure the student that things can get better. Help them realize there are options and that problems are temporary. Suggest resources: family, friends, clergy, coaches, or other professionals on campus. Recognize that your purpose is not to solve the problem.

Avoid judging, criticizing, evaluating or giving opinions. These would tend to push the student away from the help s/he needs. Respect the student's value system, even if you may not personally agree with it.

Maintain clear and consistent boundaries and expectations. Maintain the professional nature of the faculty/student or staff/student relationship, and the consistency of academic expectations, exam schedules, etc. You may be able to help a student understand options as related to deferring grades or withdrawal from course work. If the student seems overly distressed about making a decision, offer to facilitate contact with other campus professionals who can offer further assistance in the troubling area.

Refer. When making a referral, it is important to point out that help is available and that seeking help is a sign of strength and courage, not weakness or failure. It may be useful to point out that using professional help with other problems is considered good judgment and an appropriate use of resources. Help the student understand what they can expect by telling them what you know about Counseling Services or other campus or community options.

Timing. Options for referral vary depending on the time of day of student contact. Bennett Health and Wellness Center hours are Monday-Friday, 8:00am to 4:30pm. After hours and weekends, students in crisis should be advised to call the Crisis Line of Riverbend Center for Mental Health at 764-3431.

Follow-up. After the initial contact with a student, it is important to initiate follow-up contact. Follow-up helps cement the fact that a student is not alone and that others care and are willing to help them pursue options and achieve their goals.

The first counseling session...

Unless crisis intervention is needed, the initial interview with the counselor is arranged by scheduling an appointment. You can facilitate this by offering the use of your phone to the student. Services to actively enrolled students who have paid the Student Health Fee are covered at no extra charge. The student should call 765-4328 during Health Center hours to schedule ap-

pointments. For other than crisis situations, students will usually be seen within 2-5 days. If you believe the student to be in crisis and unwilling to request an appointment, you can facilitate the process by making the request for the student and explaining to the receptionist about your concerns. It may be necessary to accompany a student to Bennett Health & Wellness Center for a crisis meeting. Just prior to meeting with the counselor, the student will be asked to complete a brief intake questionnaire which will supplement the counselor's assessment of the student's needs. Assure the student that confidentiality will be maintained except in cases where disclosure is legally mandated.

After the first session...

If the student and counselor agree that further counseling is appropriate, available options will be reviewed. If a referral to resources outside the scope of on-campus counseling is needed, the counselor will facilitate those referrals for the student. There may be a waiting period for a specific service.

On-campus counseling usually involves brief therapy interventions involving one to five sessions for most students. Sessions are goal-oriented and emphasize student participation.

Some students may leave the initial interview feeling equipped to handle their problems on their own or with knowledge about other resources to contact. Students may schedule appointments for counselor contact at their discretion at any time in the future.

Consultation is available for you.

Even after reading this information, you may have questions regarding your decision to help a student at risk. The professional staff at Bennett Health & Wellness Center will be glad to assist you in person, by phone or through email.

You may have questions concerning:

- **Triage:** how to assess the seriousness of the situation...
- **Resources:** who are they, what they do, where are they located, how to contact them...
- **Your own feelings** and how to be most effective...
- **Follow-up concerns** after an intake or referral....

Please note that due to the constraints of confidentiality, we may only discuss a student's specific situation or their contact with us if the student has given us written permission to do so.

An intervention with a student whose behavior has become threatening, violent, or significantly disruptive will be different than that for the student who is open to seeking help.

If safety for the student, you, or others is in question, contact UNA Public Safety (765-4357) immediately.

Questions regarding UNA's C.A.R.E. Team (Crisis Response) protocols should be directed to the Vice President of Student Affairs or team members.

Bennett Health and Wellness Center

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