When to refer to a mental health professional

You may see a student who is experiencing psychological stress. It is important to recognize the limits of your ability to personally help and to know when other resources can best serve the student. It may be best to refer the student to a mental health professional if you notice the student:

- Is no longer able to function in his or her normal capacity within class, or has experienced a significant drop in grades or academic performance.
- Appears unable to cope with his or her day-to-day activities and responsibilities.
- Expresses depressive symptoms, such as sleep disturbance, sudden weight loss or gain, crying spells, fatigue, loss of interest or pleasure in previously enjoyed activities, or inability to concentrate or complete tasks.
- Expresses severe anxiety symptoms, such as feelings of panic, shortness of breath, headaches, sweaty palms, dry mouth, or racing thoughts.
- Has suicidal thoughts or feelings.
- Has few friends or family he or she can talk to about pressing concerns. (This person may not need counseling, but might benefit from a support group.)

What to say

When referring a student to a mental health professional, keep these three key points in mind:

1. Express concern. Empathetically point out the behaviors that are causing you concern. It is important to address a student’s need to seek help. However, it is equally important to reassure the student that everyone goes through hard times, and you understand and care about him or her.

2. Destigmatize. Discuss mental health professional support in a friendly, welcoming way. Point out that you have confidence in the office or in its therapists, or that you’ve known students who have had positive interactions with that resource.

3. Talk about options. There are a multitude of resources available. Talk about options that may best serve the particular student you’re working with, and the particular difficulties he or she is having.

How to recognize a student of concern

Students struggling with mental health may exhibit the following behaviors:

- Disrupts a class or an activity
- May be a threat to oneself
- May be a threat to others

A Student of Concern form must be completed when a student’s behavior elevates to a disruptive or threatening level.

studentconduct.usu.edu/reporting

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Mental health resources

USU Counseling and Psychological Services
Mon-Fri 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., 435.797.1012

USU Psychology Community Clinic
Mon-Thurs 8:30 a.m. to 8:30 p.m.
Friday 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., 435.797.3401

USU Marriage and Family Therapy Clinic
Usumft@usu.edu, 435.797.7430

Bear River Mental Health Clinic
24/7, 435.752.0750

Cache Valley Community Health Center
Mon-Fri 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., 435.755.6075

National Alliance on Mental Illness
800.950.6264

Mentalhealth.gov