

**GUIDE FOR REFERRING STUDENTS TO
THE PSYCHOLOGICAL COUNSELING CENTER**

Prepared by:

Psychological Counseling Center (PDRM)

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Some Common Warning Signs of Distress

You may observe that students going through an emotional hard time will display noticeable changes in their physical, behavioural, emotional characteristics and academic performance. The repetitive character of these differences over an extended period of time is a decisive factor.

- The persistence of noticeable changes in academic performance (excessive absenteeism, tardiness, drop in grades, procrastination, loss of concentration, etc.)
- Significantly noticeable social withdrawal, introversion, self-imposed isolation, or just the opposite; displaying highly assertive behaviour
- Increasingly aggressive behaviour in interpersonal relationships (manifestation of excessive aggressiveness, displaying verbal aggression by making rude comments, using offensive, harsh and violent language)
- Significantly noticeable emotional reactions such as depression, anxiety, restlessness and crying
- Sudden and frequent mood swings
- Marked difference in physical appearance or self-care (dramatic weight gain or loss, negligence of self-care and hygiene, bruises or scars, seeming to be tired and exhausted all the time, etc.)
- Marked difference in speech and movement patterns (logorrhoea, disorganisation of speech, hyperactivity or slowness of movements, saying bizarre things, etc.)
- Behaviour that indicates flaw in reasoning and perception of reality (irrational suspicions and distrust in others, paranoid delusions, etc.)
- Verbal and visual signs conveying the message that the individual may harm himself/herself or other people
- Behaviour and attitudes indicating alcohol and/or drug abuse

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What Can You Do for a Student in Distress?

1. TALK to the Student

Just a casual conversation in the classroom will not be suitable for this type of communication. Talk to the student when both of you can spare the time for it and express your concerns to the student in private. Choose a suitable time, as well as, a quiet and safe place where you will not be disturbed.

WHEN YOU ARE TALKING...

- State explicitly why you wanted to see him/her privately.
- Tell him/her of your observations that made you think s/he was having problems. State the behavioural changes that you have noticed. Try to communicate your concern rather than your fear, shock or anger. Tell the student that you have noticed he/she has a problem, that you really care about his/her well-being and are ready to help.
- Try to find out what the problem is and ask him/her if he/she would like to share his/her problems with you. Remember that it will comfort and make many students feel good when someone notices the problems they are experiencing and pays attention.
- Avoid presuppositions, labelling, judging, criticism and commenting. Just let your student know why you are concerned about him/her. Presuppositions, diagnosing, disease names and labels will adversely affect the process of support.

2. LISTEN to the Student

Give the student a chance to answer your questions and express his/her ideas and feelings. Pay close attention to what the student thinks and feels on the issue. Just a few moments of genuine concern to his/her distress may assure the student that he/she is being taken seriously and make him/her feel more confident and be responsive to getting help.

WHEN YOU ARE LISTENING...

- When you are listening, try to understand the situation from their point of view. Do not criticise, judge, assess, or give advice immediately.
- A critical or judgemental approach may drive the students away from you and prospective help resources.
- Instil hope. Reassure them that their problems can be solved. Tell them that things can be better and that everything will work out just fine. Emphasize that there are alternative solutions.

3. Ask the student if they have discussed the matter with anybody else (a family member, a friend, a professional).

4. Try to learn how the student handled this problem previously, and what solutions he/she has tried in order to overcome the problem.

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5. Discuss other possible solutions with the student. Mention the advantages and disadvantages of each alternative to help the student decide for himself.
6. If you think it is necessary, present professional counseling to the student as an option

Important Points....

- ❖ The student may not be ready to share all his /her problems with you immediately.
- ❖ Do not forget that this kind of communication is based on confidence. Show respect to the confidentiality of the information that the student shares with you.
- ❖ When you are helping the students, your role is to support the students and to refer them to appropriate resources when necessary, not to solve their problems for them. Do not overact your role and try to make decisions for the students
- ❖ Set your own physical and emotional boundaries and guard them. State frankly and clearly what you can do to help the students deal with their problems. Maintain clear and consistent boundaries and expectations with the students in your staff or faculty role. Be specific on your boundaries, requirements (homework, exam dates, financial liabilities) and relations (instructor-student, administrator-student, etc.) with the students.

When to Refer to the PSYCHOLOGICAL COUNSELING CENTER

There may be situations when the best option is to refer the student to the Psychological Counseling Center. For example:

- If you believe that the nature and severity of the student's problem is beyond your scope of expertise,
- If the student acknowledges his/her problem but refuses to discuss it with you,
- If you don't feel comfortable with the student and/or the problem he/she is experiencing, and you believe that your feelings will make it difficult for you to handle the situation,
- If your position does not allow you to offer the support demanded by the student or required by the situation,
- If you are too stressed and/or too busy yourself and believe that you will not be able to provide the support expected of you,
- If the problem still persists in spite of all your efforts,

you should refer the student to the Psychological Counseling Center.

How to Refer the Students to the PSYCHOLOGICAL COUNSELING CENTER

- ✓ Explain to the student why you are making the referral.
- ✓ Fully explain the services the Psychological Counseling Center offers. Share all you know about the unit and any booklet/brochure about the Psychological Counseling Center (<https://bau.edu.tr/content/3504-bau-psychological-counseling-center-pdrm>) with the



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student. Informing the student may help alleviate the anxiety that he/she feels about applying to the center.

- ✓ Assure the student that the principle of confidentiality is strictly applied as regards the Psychological Counseling Center Services. In accordance with ethical regulations, no information whatsoever about the students who have applied to the Psychological Counseling Center will be disclosed or shared with any other individuals, units or institutions, without prior consent from the student himself/herself.
- ✓ Remind the students that the Psychological Counseling Center services are free of charge and can be online.
- ✓ Inquire about the student's thoughts and feelings about the referral suggestion.
- ✓ If your student is receptive and displays a positive attitude to your suggestions, you may assist him/her in how to approach the Psychological Counseling Center and make a counseling appointment. You can offer to help the student by mediating in directing the student to apply to the center himself/herself.
- ✓ If the student takes a defensive attitude and is reluctant to access counseling, don't force the issue and don't attempt to deceive or trick the student into visiting the center. Except in emergencies, when the student is an immediate threat to himself/herself or others, psychological counseling is an option that the students may benefit from at their own free will. Restate your concern once again and communicate your understanding and empathy for his/her reluctance.
- ✓ In spite of all your personal effort and the rationale you put forward, the student may still be reluctant to seek psychological support. Encourage the student to think it over and contact you when he feels ready to talk. Leave the situation open for possible reconsideration at a later time.
- ✓ You can contact us for any questions regarding referrals to the Psychological Counseling Center at:

Beşiktaş South Campus

PDRM Office: Çırağan Cad. No:15/4 Beşiktaş- İstanbul. The center is located above the "Kırmızı Kedi Kitabevi" just across the entrance of BAU Beşiktaş South Campus.

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After Referral to The Psychological Counseling Center

- The Psychological Counseling Center at Bahçeşehir University works in accordance with the principle of confidentiality. It strictly protects the confidentiality of the information shared during the counseling sessions and even the student's attendance to the counseling sessions is kept private and confidential. The student's personal information will not be shared with any other individuals or institutions without the student's written permission (signed release).
- The students, however, are not required to abide by the principle of confidentiality and may freely share their personal information if they choose to do so. You may continue to see the student and may inquire about the effects of the counseling process without going into specific details.
- If you want to know if the student you referred to the Psychological Counseling Center has actually applied to the service, it is best to ask the student himself/herself. In accordance with the principle of confidentiality, the Psychological Counseling Center will not reveal such information to you.
- If you think you need to give further information about the student you have referred to the center, the Psychological Counseling Center may listen to you in a private session. However, we, as Psychological Counseling Center are supposed to notify the student about this incident, in accordance with ethical principles.
- Applying and attendance to the Psychological Counseling Center is up to the student. Therefore; attendance is not compulsory. After the student is referred, the course of proceeding will be decided on mutually in accordance with the student's needs and circumstances. Once the emergency situation is eliminated, it is not advisable to force if the student does not want to continue the sessions. Forcing the students insisting to follow the process will have adverse effects on the student.
- The counseling process may not immediately lead to concrete outcomes. It may take weeks, months and sometimes even longer to attain the desired result. The change may not be physically obvious but may be evident through different internal mechanisms (like emotions, thoughts). It is important not to be specifically outcome oriented.
- After being referred to the Psychological Counseling Center, if the student no longer seeks your assistance, you should be content that you have done your share. Remember that trying to achieve anything more than that would be going beyond your limits and urging the student.
- Psychological Counseling Center offers protective and preventive mental health services, Therefore; in cases which fall outside this framework and require more comprehensive provision and care, or in various emergency situations, our students may be referred to other health care facilities outside the university (hospital, psychiatric clinic, etc.).