



Muhlenberg College

Health & Counseling
Services

**A REFERRAL GUIDE
FOR FACULTY & STAFF**

Counseling Services
484-664-3178

Counseling Services

A Referral Guide for Faculty and Staff

The purpose of this publication is to assist faculty and staff in their efforts to enhance the educational and personal achievements of Muhlenberg College students by providing some information about situations or circumstances in which Counseling Services lend assistance.

There has been a steady demand from students in requesting counseling at Muhlenberg College. The average number of sessions used per year by the students who visit is approximately 4.

The information contained in this document explains when professional counseling might be beneficial to an individual and how to make a referral to Counseling Services. The concept of professional confidentiality and information about referral and consultation services are also discussed.

Location: LSC, Suite 200
(2nd Floor, Directly above the Health Suite)
Phone: 484-664-3178

Hours: 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.
Monday through Friday
Closed Saturday and Sunday

For emergencies during non-business hours please call our direct line and you will be put in touch with an on-call therapist.

THE ROLE OF FACULTY AND STAFF

Students in distress seek the advice and counsel of individuals in their lives with whom they often have immediate contact. In a college setting, faculty and staff interact with students on a frequent basis.

Your ability to recognize signs of serious emotional distress and your courage to acknowledge your concerns are often later noted by students as the most significant factor in their seeking help and successfully resolving the problem.

Therefore, you may become a potential resource to students in times of trouble, no matter how comfortable you are in that role. Please use this guide as a point of reference when thinking about when and how to refer a student for more help.

Feel free to consult Counseling Services any time for help as well as to explore the other links for Faculty that contain useful information and resources for how you can best help your students.

Introduction to Counseling Services

Counseling Services at Muhlenberg offers five basic services using a community-based approach of short-term therapy.

Emergency Interventions: Immediate, in-person support during normal business hours and telephone support after hours is available for students experiencing immediate mental health crises or emergencies. Both of these services can be reached by calling the Counseling Services main number at 484-664-3178. Faculty, staff, students, and parents can all access these emergency services as long as the person in need of support is a Muhlenberg College student currently matriculating.

Consultation: Counseling Services staff are available for consultation when a timely and urgent concern arises, but one that does not rise to the level of imminent/emergent. The average wait time for a consultation session is 0-1 days from time of request. Faculty may request an in-person session or a telephone session to receive a consultation. Overall, however, faculty are strongly encouraged to complete a student of concern reporting form via the Dean of Students website because all communication within Counseling Services remains confidential, thereby creating a potential roadblock to access additional resources for the student of concern.

Counseling: Close to half of the student population will receive counseling from our center prior to graduating. The average wait time for a session is 1-2 days. Professors are encouraged to refer students to Counseling Services for further assistance on their personal and emotional concerns. Individual and group counseling sessions are available to full-time, residential students. Wescoe students may access an off-campus referral via our referral list. We offer customized care that will match the intensity of treatment to the presenting concern. We don't have session limits, but our primary scope of practice remains short-term therapy. If more intensive treatment (i.e., multiple times per week or of longer duration) or treatment that requires a specialty beyond the scope of practice within the center (e.g., eating disorders), then a student may be referred to an off-campus provider.

Referrals: A list of talented therapists who practice in the surrounding community is available on the website. Please feel free to call Counseling Services if you'd like to discuss our various impressions of these community providers.

Outreach & Education: Counseling Services offers a wide variety of outreach and educational programming to campus partners. Such programs are available for student groups as well as administrators and faculty. Please visit the Outreach tab on the website for a description of available programs.

Verification of Treatment/Absence from Class

If a professor requires a student to provide documentation for their absence from any class-related responsibilities, then a letter from Brynmarie Dorsey, Executive Director of Health & Counseling Services will be provided specifying the date(s) of the necessary medical treatment. The letter will not disclose the nature of the medical care. We offer such a letter as a potential verification of medical treatment, but we reinforce to all students requesting such a letter that the ultimate decision for any flexibility for class related responsibilities lies with the professor based on their assessment of a fair consideration of the basic class requirements. In other words, we never offer a verification of medical treatment as a binding request, but rather simply as a verification of treatment and always acknowledge that the ultimate decision for flexibility lies solely with the professor.

A Word About Confidentiality

Counseling Services at Muhlenberg College is governed by legal and ethical standards of confidentiality. Any and all participation at Counseling Services is strictly confidential. Any student wishing information to be released to parents, faculty, administration, etc., must sign a release of information indicating this intent.

Furthermore, counseling records are separate from academic or administrative records at the College. There are legal limits to confidentiality such as:

- Evidence of clear and imminent danger of harm to self or others may require a counselor to report this information to the authorities in an effort to ensure the safety of the student or others.
- Pennsylvania state law requires the mandatory and immediate reporting of any information pertaining to the possible physical or sexual abuse of any person under 18 years of age or in the case of elder abuse. Abuse to a person who was under the age of 18 at the time of abuse, but who is now over the age of 18 may prompt mandatory reporting depending on the situation.
- A court order, issued by a judge, may require the releasing of information contained in our records or may require a counselor to testify in a court hearing. [This exception does not include judicial hearings held within the College.]

Cost

Counseling services are offered as part of the health services fee that full-time, traditional students pay as part of tuition. Therefore, the cost is free and insurance is not required.

What to Look For

If you observe or are informed of these behaviors, you should consider making a referral to Counseling Services.

- Missing classes, responsibilities, procrastination, avoidance
- Poor academic performance or drop-off
- Excessive anxiety or panic
- Depression, chronic fatigue, suicidal thoughts or thoughts of self-harm
- Severe self-doubt, low self-esteem
- Confused, disorganized, or suspicious thinking
- Bizarre or inappropriate behavior and/or appearance
- Changes in personal relationships or physical appearance
- Loneliness and poor relationship skills
- More talkative than usual, unusual energy, decreased need for sleep
- Confusion regarding sexual behavior and identity
- Perfectionistic behavior and overwhelming test anxiety
- Problems with alcohol or other drugs
- Eating or body image problems
- Aggressive or overly argumentative behavior

To anonymously report a difficult, concerning, or inappropriate situation that occurred in our Muhlenberg Community please use the [Incident Reporting Form](#) which can be found on the Dean of Students website.

How to Help a Student

Below are several recommendations for how Faculty members can approach and support a distressed student and make a referral to Counseling Services. Faculty may also call to consult about how to address a particular student concern more specifically.

- Arrange to speak to the student in private.
- Avoid sounding judgmental or offering advice outside of your expertise.
- Show concern and interest.
- Listen carefully to what the student is attempting to say.
- Express why you think that counseling might be helpful, while also stressing that it's the student's choice to seek counseling. Offer to walk them to our office when necessary.
- When you feel your personal relationship with the student prevents you from offering objective assistance, or when you feel unable to help the student due to time or skill, encourage them to seek counseling.

- Reassure the student of your concern for their welfare and your desire for them to talk to someone who may be more helpful, available, or skilled in working with their problem.
- Assure the student that counseling is confidential. Click [here](#) for our confidentiality policy.
- Have the student call Counseling Services from your office to schedule an appointment. If the student is reluctant to set up an appointment suggest that he/she utilize a consultation appointment.
- If the student is reluctant to seek help, ask the student to think about your recommendation or to just try one counseling session. Refer the student to the [“Information for Students”](#) section of this website for more information about our office and mental health information. Let the student know that because of your concern, you will follow up with them again in a week.
- In an emergency, you may choose to walk the student over to Counseling Services. Please click [here](#) for emergency information. We consider a situation to be an emergency when there is imminent danger of physical harm to self and/or others, disabling emotional distress (uncontrollable crying, agitation), and/or gross impairment in thinking. If possible, please call the office to let us know that you are escorting a student to our office. This will allow us to be prepared to have a counselor available to meet with your student when you arrive.
- After business hours, call Counseling Services at 484-664-3178 and the caller will be put in touch with an on-call therapist.

How to Follow-Up

We understand that you may be interested in knowing whether a student followed up on your referral. Due to ethics, federal and state laws, and concern that clients might be reluctant to fully discuss problems, counselors may not share any information, including attendance, without a written release, except in life-threatening situations. If a student mentions that they have been referred, the counselor encourages the student to return to the referring person to let them know how the session went. You can always ask the student directly, or ask the student to sign a release at Counseling Services, allowing us to share information with you. In addition, you can call Counseling Service to consult about how to handle interactions with the student after you have made your referral.

