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TITLE: Counseling Services Policy

EFFECTIVE DATE: October 1, 2014

LAST REVISION: November 1, 2014

Policy No. 5.531

Policy Statement

Purpose

This procedure establishes the use of Counseling Services at Baton Rouge Community College.

Scope

Counseling Services provides students, staff, faculty, and parents with consultation on situations where input from mental health professionals might be helpful. We also offer faculty and staff consultation focused on clarifying personal, family, and work-related concerns and identifying treatment and other resources in the community.

Definitions

Counseling Services - activities designed to assist students in making plans and decisions related to their education, career, or personal development

Services Provided-

- Individual and group counseling
- Psycho-educational workshops and seminars
- Crisis intervention and consultation
- Referral services
- Self-help handouts

Informed Consent - Louisiana's law requires that Counselors, during an initial session with a client, inform the client about confidentiality and exceptions to confidentiality contained in state statutes. All new clients are asked to review and sign a form entitled Counseling Intake Form that explains services offered, confidentiality and limits to confidentiality, and staff consultation. Occasionally a client will decline to sign the form. If the client verbally indicates an understanding of the material contained in the form and a desire to receive services, the counselor should document this in the progress notes along with the client's concerns about signing the form. The counselor may then proceed to work with the student, providing counseling and/or assessment and referral

Confidentiality - Counselors and professional staff members do not discuss cases in the halls or leave charts unattended. Counselors may divulge information only with the client's consent and only the minimum amount necessary. Counselors write progress notes in respectful tones and assume the notes may be read by the client and could become part of legal proceedings. Counselors set limits on inappropriate requests by administrators and parents for information. Counselors routinely advise clients of the legal limits to confidentiality.



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Mandated Reporting - In Louisiana, as in most states, all licensed mental health professionals are mandated to report abuse and neglect of children under age 18, abuse and exploitation of disabled persons, and abuse and exploitation of persons over the age of 60. Counselors can call the appropriate agencies and describe a questionable situation and be advised as to whether it needs to be reported.

Crisis - is defined as:

1. a person who has conveyed verbally or behaviorally that he/she is in crisis
2. a person who is disoriented and confused or lacks contact with reality
3. a person who disrupts college operations.
4. a person who is in imminent danger of hurting him/herself or others

General Counseling Policy

Each individual is entitled to privacy in his/her work with a counselor. All contacts with a counselor are confidential to Counseling Services professional staff. Written permission is required for Counseling Services to release information to others outside Counseling Services. A court order may require an exception to the lawful protection of individual legal rights to privileged communication with a counselor.

If it becomes clear in the counseling session that there is a real danger to one or to others, Counseling Services is required to take action. Reports of abuse of children or others unable to care for themselves will also require some action to be taken. Confidentiality laws do not apply in these cases.

Release of Information Policy

1. All communication between a client and a counselor is confidential and will not, except under the circumstances explained below, be disclosed to anyone outside of Counseling Services unless written authorization to release information is given. A Release of Information Form will need to be signed to have a Counseling Services professional staff communicate information to anyone. A record is kept of a client's work with Counseling Services. It contains information a client has provided to Counseling Services in writing as well as counseling notes from client sessions. The record remains in Counseling Services for a period of five years following the client's last visit; at that time, it is destroyed. **A client's record never leaves Counseling Services and never becomes a part of the educational record.**
2. . Most limits to confidentiality are to ensure safety. If there is evidence of imminent danger of harm to the client or other(s), Counseling Services must take action. If a client describes abuse of a child or elder, the information will be reported to the appropriate agency. It is possible a court order may require release of privileged communication.
3. Counseling information cannot be released to the following without the client's written consent:
 - parents or guardians, spouse, siblings, or significant other
 - another doctor, lawyer, or health organization
 - insurance company, disability payment source, or state agency



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Procedure

Eligibility for Services

Baton Rouge Community College Counseling Services provides individual counseling utilizing a short-term, problem oriented, solution-focused model. The following guidelines are provided for those situations in which a student's needs are not likely to be met by a short-term model of treatment.

1. Students must be enrolled in classes at BRCC in order to utilize the resources of Counseling Services.
2. Students with psychiatric disabilities such as bipolar disorder, schizophrenia and recurrent serious depression will receive crisis counseling but should continue their personal psychiatric care off-campus since these conditions require long-term follow-up. Counseling Services will offer academic case management. Support may be offered to help students cope with college life.
3. Students needing treatment for alcoholism or drug addiction will be referred to programs off campus.
4. Students who complete a course of short-term counseling/therapy and as a result identify a need for longer-term work may be referred off campus for individual.

Referral to Off-Campus Providers of Psychotherapy

Counseling Services maintains a list of area mental health professionals in private practice and area mental health clinics. Referral to any of these professionals does not constitute an endorsement and clients are counseled that they may have to shop around to find a therapist who is a good fit for them.

Off-Campus Referrals for Psychotropic Medication

Students with psychotic illness and bipolar disorder will be referred to local mental health clinics or psychiatrists in private practice for medication management. Students with depression, ADHD, and anxiety disorders may be referred to their primary care physician or to a psychiatrist near their home for medication evaluation and management.


After Hours Counseling Emergencies

Students who receive counseling are informed that they can contact THE PHONE at 225/924-3900 or 1-800-437-0303 after regular business hours when in crisis.

***Under no circumstances shall a staff/faculty member transport a student in their personal vehicle.**

Source of Policy: Office of Counseling & Disability Services

Related Policy: Americans w/ Disabilities Act

Approved by: 
Chancellor Andrea Lewis Miller

Responsible Administrator: Director of Counseling Services

LCTCS Policy Reference: 6.023

LCTCS Guideline Reference: ADA: Employees & Students

Date: 11/01/14