Study Abroad: Helping Students in Distress

On behalf of UConn Counseling & Mental Health Services
Erin Cox, Psy.D. – Assistant Director, Director of Outreach
What is the goal of staff intervention with distressed students?

• Preserving the living and learning environment
• Ensuring campus safety
• Promoting student retention and success
Study Abroad: Special Considerations

• CMHS has a limited ability to support students away from campus
• It’s important to identify local resources in advance
• Consult, consult, consult!

➢ If you have concerns, get support. Consult with the Directors of Global Affairs via email, or for emergencies call the 24/7 line 860-420-9112
**Trends at CMHS:**

- Increased utilization of services
- Increased acuity
Trends...

- Anxiety is the most common presenting concern
Your experiences already?

As faculty/staff, what experiences have you already had related to student mental health?

- How did you respond?
- What went well?
- What would you do differently?
# Mental Health as a Continuum

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Health</th>
<th>Reacting</th>
<th>Injured</th>
<th>Severe Impairment</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Adjustment concern</td>
<td>• Mild anxiety</td>
<td>• Depression</td>
<td>• Complex trauma</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Social difficulty</td>
<td>• Identity exploration</td>
<td>• Trauma</td>
<td>• Psychosis</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Academic challenge</td>
<td>• Some impact on functioning</td>
<td>• Chronic or severe impairment</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Informal support</td>
<td>• Reflective listening</td>
<td>• Refer for assessment</td>
<td>• High Risk</td>
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<td>• Self help and coping</td>
<td>• Self care and coping</td>
<td>• Course of treatment</td>
<td>• Need for multidisciplinary care</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Campus resources</td>
<td>• Refer to supportive services</td>
<td>• CMHS, Dean of Students, CSD</td>
<td>• CMHS, CARE team, 911</td>
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<td>(Cultural Centers, advisors)</td>
<td>(Academic Achievement, CMHS)</td>
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Prevention: Developing Resilience

**Recognize** – Admit (normalize) struggles/challenges

**Reframe** – Our setbacks can direct innovation and growth

**Reflect** – Define personal role in success

**Reach out** – Encourage connection to resources. Success doesn’t happen in isolation
Statement on Success

Success in this course program depends heavily on your personal health and wellbeing. Recognize that stress is an expected part of the college experience, and it often can be compounded by unexpected setbacks or life changes outside the classroom. Your instructors and I strongly encourage you to reframe challenges as an unavoidable pathway to success. Reflect on your role in taking care of yourself throughout the term, before the demands of exams and projects reach their peak. Please feel free to reach out to me about any difficulty you may be having that may impact your performance in your courses or campus life as soon as it occurs and before it becomes too overwhelming. In addition to your academic advisor, I strongly encourage you to contact the many other support services on campus that stand ready to assist you.

Provided by David Reetz, Ph.D., Rochester Institute of Technology
**Intervention: Recognizing the Warning Signs**

**Significant Changes in Mood and Attitude**
- Irritability
- Sadness, Helplessness
- Acting-out Behaviors

**Changes in academic performance**
- Strange or Alarming Comments or Writings

**Change in Hygiene**
Intervention: LISTEN

• “It sounds like…”
• “What I hear you saying is…”
• “I get a sense that…”
• “It feels as though…”
• “Help me understand... On the one hand you... and on the other hand you...”
Helping Students in Distress

It is not uncommon for students to have thoughts of suicide as a result of a mental health condition... **YOU** can be the one to intervene!

- Talk to the person alone in a private setting
- If in doubt, don’t wait, ask the question, “Are you having thoughts of suicide?”
- Allow the person to talk freely, use your reflective listening skills
- Be ready to help the person access resources
Intervention: Referral

I can hear that you’re struggling with this, and I want to help in the best way I can. I think it would be good for us to call _________________ for some support and ideas on our next steps. **Let’s do it together.**
Resources:
asklistenrefer.org/uconn
Resources:

**UConn:**
- Counseling & Mental Health Services
- Student Health Services
- UConn Police Department
- UConn CARE Team

**National:**
- Suicide Prevention Lifeline
- Crisis Text Line
- Prevent Suicide CT
- Samaritans 24-Hour Crisis Hotline
- The Trevor Project

**International:**
- International Association for Suicide Prevention
- Talkspace online therapy service