

How to Refer a Student to Counseling- A Script and Advice for Faculty

We are frequently contacted by faculty with concerns about students. We are happy to consult with faculty to figure out how to connect the student with our office in a way that is most comfortable for the student. Often this involves the faculty member serving as the “connection,” by introducing the student to a counseling team member in person, by email, or by phone.

We understand that referring a student to counseling can feel uncomfortable. For this reason, we have provided the following information and script that we hope will guide you in your conversations with students.

General Tips on Speaking with a Student

- 1) Talk to the student privately to help minimize embarrassment and defensiveness.
- 2) Do not promise the student confidentiality regarding what he or she shares.
- 3) Listen carefully and respond to both the content and the emotions of the situation.
- 4) Discuss your observations and perceptions of the situation directly and honestly.
- 5) Express your concern in a non-judgmental way. Respect the student’s value system, even if you do not agree with it.
- 6) Assist the student with problem solving: identify options for action and resources available for help.
- 7) Let the student know the limits on your ability to help him or her.
- 8) It often helps to remind the student that most successful people have used some sort of counseling or coaching at some point in their lives and that it can be an important tool to help you reach your full potential.
- 9) Encourage your student to take a look at the Personal Counseling website at www.maryville.edu/counseling. The website provides helpful information about various mental health concerns and services. Also, there is an excellent anonymous mental health assessment available through the ULifeline website at: www.ulifeline.org.

Ways to Refer Students to the Office of Personal Counseling

- 1) Provide the student with our number, website, and other contact information.
- 2) Offer to email the Office of Personal Counseling for the student. Include the student on the email to put us in touch him/her. We can then respond to the student directly based on your introduction.
- 3) Ask the student for permission to share his/her phone number with the Office of Personal Counseling so that a counselor can call her/him.
- 4) Offer to walk the student to the front desk in the Division of Student Success to make an appointment.
- 5) If the student is in crisis during business hours, offer to walk them over to the Office of Personal Counseling for a walk-in session.

Sample Script for Referring a Student to Counseling

“Thank you for coming to meet with me.

I wanted to speak with you about some things that I have noticed that have concerned me.

I have noticed (that you seem upset in class, that you are not turning in assignments, that you wrote something disturbing in a paper etc). These things have led me to feel concerned about you, and I wanted to make sure that you are ok.

While I would like to help you, unfortunately I am not a professional in this area. I was wondering if you knew about the counseling services that Maryville offers? A lot of students use counseling, and I have seen it help many other students. Would it be alright if I put you in touch with one of our counselors?”