

The graphic consists of two overlapping speech bubbles. The top-left bubble is yellow and contains the text 'Refer a'. The bottom-right bubble is red and contains the text 'Student'. The text is in a white, serif font with a slight drop shadow.

Refer a  
Student

Counseling Center

1<sup>st</sup> Floor, Jonsson Tower

518-580-5555

## The Skidmore College Counseling Center

### Who we are and what we do:

The Counseling Center is staffed by skilled and professional mental health clinicians, and is conveniently located on the 1<sup>st</sup> floor of Jonsson Tower, next to Health Services. We provide short-term individual therapy (up to 8 sessions/year), group therapy, third-party consultations, emergency services, and tailored referral services to more than 500 students per year.

### How do I make an appointment?

Just stop by during our regular business hours. We ask students to fill out about 10 minutes worth of paperwork and then get them scheduled for an initial appointment. Our average wait for a first appointment is usually 4-5 business days and, outside of peak times, we're able to see many students faster than that.

### Can I make an appointment for someone else?

No. You're very welcome to walk in with someone as a way to help them feel more comfortable, but we need students to voluntarily commit to scheduling and keeping their own appointments. We are willing to include friends or other support persons in clinical appointments, with a student's permission.

### Will you tell anyone I have been to the Counseling Center?

No. As licensed mental health practitioners, we are legally and ethically mandated to maintain confidentiality. That mandate means we do not release any information without a patient's written and fully informed consent. There are very strict exceptions to confidentiality, and those include: situations where the clinicians are informed about current child or elder abuse or neglect, and situations where the clinician is highly concerned that a student is very likely to try to hurt himself/herself or someone else in significant and immediate ways. In situations where we are worried about someone's safety, we typically work with them to help set up a safety plan. Breaking confidentiality is a last resort and is only done to maintain safety or in compliance with a court order.

### Do I have to use insurance or pay for appointments?

No. All of our services are included in tuition and any fully enrolled Skidmore student is eligible to use them.

## After Hours Emergencies

For emergencies after hours and on weekends, when the college is in session, please call 518-580-5555 and follow the prompt to access the appropriate resource.

## Confidentiality

It is important for the members of the College community to understand that counseling is confidential in nature and that information regarding counseling sessions cannot be released without a student's written permission. The areas of confidentiality include whether the student has or has not come to the Center and the content of sessions. These rules hold for all cases, except in emergency situations where there is a clear threat to life. If an administrator, faculty or staff member is interested in following up on a referral to the Counseling Center, it is best to speak directly with the student, who is not legally obligated by the same promise of confidentiality as professional clinicians.

## Counseling Center Facts

- **We usually see more than 20% of the student population** in any given academic year. This means that one in five of your friends or classmates will go to the Counseling Center this year.
- **Counseling is under your control.** You don't have to talk about anything that you don't want to. Most of the students who go to the CC go for a few sessions. You would choose what you talk about, with whom you meet and how many times you go.
- **It is confidential and included in tuition.** This will likely be the easiest access most students will have to mental health care. We're right on campus and there's no additional charge for services. And, except for certain *emergency* situations, no one knows you see us unless you choose to tell them.
- **Counseling helps in a way nothing else can.** It's different than talking with a friend. The clinician's job is to listen and support you in resolving any problem you're having with friends, family or how you're feeling in general. Their goal is to be there for you. A lot of people go to therapy to have someone to talk to who is objective and who doesn't have judgment or opinion about how you live your life.

## When to Refer a Student to the Counseling Center

The Center receives many calls from members of the Skidmore Community who are concerned about students in emotional distress. This communication link is vital because friends, staff, and faculty may be in the best position to observe signs and symptoms that indicate a need to refer someone for professional assistance. Below are some of the general signs of significant distress:

- References to suicide.
- Noticeable isolation.
- Significant decrease or increase in energy and motivational level.
- Marked change in behavior; e.g., (a) change in appearance (b) erratic class attendance or class performance; (c) sudden unwillingness to communicate; (d) significant drop in grades.
- Drug and alcohol abuse.
- Food restriction, bingeing, and/or purging.
- Self-deprecation and excessive self-criticism.
- Statements reflecting a sense of worthlessness, hopelessness or helplessness.
- Psychosomatic symptoms, such as tension-induced headaches, nausea, change in appetite or in sleeping habits.
- Anxiety, depression or excessive stress.
- Mood or behavior changes following a sudden or major change in a relationship, such as a divorce or a death.
- Academic problems, such as career indecision, dissatisfaction with academic major, inability to concentrate and difficulty with workload.
- Threatening bodily injury or harm to others.
- Violent behavior or excessive anger.
- Paranoid thoughts.
- Marked disorientation or confusion.

## How to Refer

*When you are referring someone to the Counseling Center:*

- Be straightforward and direct about what you've observed that has led you to be concerned about the person.
- Speak up sooner rather than later. Like most things in life, the earlier counseling can intervene, the better.
- Communicate your caring and concern and be clear that the referral is part of that concern.
- Think of your conversation as a first step. The other person may need time to think about your suggestions and make a decision.
- Be respectful. Ultimately, it is up to the person to make their own decisions about how and when to get help.

If the person you are worried about is hesitating, here are some poten-

## Potential Ways to Refer a Student

tial ways to frame the referral conversation:

- "You seem very upset; perhaps it might be helpful to speak with someone. There are therapists available to students at the Counseling Center."
- "Counseling can be helpful for people who feel the way you do. If you'd like, you can use my phone to call the Counseling Center to find out how you can make an appointment. Or, if you'd like, I'd be happy to walk over with you now to find out about speaking with someone there."
- "You don't have to continue feeling so depressed (anxious, isolated, stressed out, angry, etc.) Counseling can help. Why don't we walk over to the Counseling Center (located on the 1st floor of Jonsson Tower) and make an appointment for you to speak with someone."

- "I can't help you, but I know someone who can. Some of the problems that are (making it hard for you to focus on classes) (making you unhappy) (making you stressed out) are not really my area of expertise. The CC staff have more experience helping students deal with those things. They can sit down with you and figure out a plan to help."
- "Just check it out. You can get an idea of what the CC does and who works there by looking at their website. You can request to see a specific therapist. And, you can decide to just make one appointment to see what it's like."
- "What can I do to help you make an appointment? What would help you feel more comfortable setting up an appointment? Would you like me to walk over there with you? Would you like to go over together to get some pamphlets and check out the vibe of the office? Do you want me to check in with you in a few weeks to see how it's going?"
- "If you had a broken leg, you would see a medical doctor. There is clear evidence that certain conditions like depression and anxiety have both psychological and physical components. Trying to "snap out of it" or hoping that these conditions will go away over time is an unfair expectation. You deserve to have your distress/pain/difficulties taken seriously and to be seen by someone who can help you."

Feel free to use, amend or expand on any of the recommendations above. Except in emergencies, the most important thing is to present your concern in such a way that the student can freely accept, consider or decline your suggestion

Remember, some people need time in order to think over the decision to seek counseling. A caring and gentle suggestion is usually enough. If a student emphatically says "no" to the idea, then it's important to respect and accept that decision and to perhaps leave the door open for other alternatives or later reconsideration