

Mental Health Guidelines

An interview with Ms. Renee Weiss, Assistant Director, Counseling Services:

1. What types of mental health services are available to TAMUK students?

- Student Health and Wellness, Counseling Services, offers individual personal counseling focusing on short-term treatment goals in order to facilitate adjustment, improve functioning, and address acute symptoms that may impede student success. Personal stressors may include issues such as relationship difficulties, self-esteem issues, depression, stress, suicidal thoughts, and/or any other issue causing distress. Psychological screenings and assessments may be utilized to aid in the counseling process and to gather the information that will enable you and your clinician to set appropriate treatment goals. If your needs are outside of the scope of TAMUK resources, we will help you to access other appropriate campus or community resources.
- Services are available to TAMUK students who are currently enrolled during the academic session. Sessions are free and confidential to the full limits of the law. Students are responsible for keeping all scheduled appointments.
- Student Health and Wellness, Counseling Services offers both face-to-face and Tele-Mental Health counseling appointments. Tele-Mental Health is delivered through the HIPAA secure platform ZOOM.

Additional information may be found on our website:

<https://www.tamuk.edu/shw/counseling-services/index.html>

2. How can students access these resources?

Please call 361.593.8050 to set up an appointment for any of our services.

3. If a faculty member is concerned about the mental health of a student, what steps could they take to help the student?

The first step is to create a safe, caring environment where students feel you are approachable

- Establish a rapport and talk to the student to get a sense of what is going on.
- Be supportive and encourage the student to make an appointment with Counseling Services 361.593.5080.
- Feel free to call Student Health and Wellness Counseling Services to discuss your concern or assist the student in making an appointment 361.593.5080.
- Student Health and Wellness has a “Counselor on Duty” for walk-in and crisis situations Monday – Friday, 8:00 am – 5:00 pm. Please walk the student over to Student Health and Wellness if the student is in need of immediate assistance.
- You may also call the University Police Department, 361.593.2611, if the student is in need of immediate assistance, after hours, on weekends and on holidays. UPD will get a hold of a counselor to assist a student in crisis after hours if needed.

4. The pandemic has created new anxieties for students, and has increased rates of depression among college students. What can professors expect as they head back to the classroom, and what steps can they take to create a good environment for students?

The pandemic has created new anxieties not only for students, but for faculty and staff as well. As we get students back on track academically, it is important to make space for social-emotional learning. Many individuals have experienced trauma during this time in one form or fashion. Traumatized individuals are especially prone to difficulty in self-regulation, negative thinking, being on high alert, and difficulty trusting others. Students' primary concerns for fall are centered around motivation and concentration, with mental health concerns also significant. Nearly one-quarter of students have lingering concerns about COVID-19. Consider creating an environment that is supportive as well as the tips below.

Mental Health Tips for Faculty:

- 1. Consider including a statement in your syllabus on mental health.** This helps to destigmatize mental health issues, demonstrates the link between mental health and academic success, and provides information regarding resources available on campus.
- 2. Share your own experiences with overcoming adversity.** When students understand that faculty members have struggled too, it creates a culture that seeking help is a sign of strength.
- 3. Consider establishing classrooms that promote a sense of connection and a growth mindset.** ACUE provides tips for this under "Establishing a Productive Learning Environment" at https://acue.org/?acue_courses=acues-effective-practice-framework
- 4. Make it clear to students that you are approachable.** Please let students know that they can come to you if they are struggling for any reason, and check in with students if you are concerned about them.
- 5. Please be aware of the following warning signs that a student may need support:**
 - a. Missing class, assignments, or exams.
 - b. Repeated requests for extensions or excused absences.
 - c. Lack of responsiveness to outreach
 - d. Student uses phrases like "I'm really stressed," or "I feel overwhelmed."
- 6. Utilize the technique of "Validate-Appreciate-Refer":**
 - a. Please listen to your students as they share. Keep Title IX reporting requirements in mind, in case they disclose something you are required to report.
 - b. Validate their feelings with phrases such as "That sounds really difficult."
 - c. Appreciate the student's willingness to share, with phrases such as "Thank you for sharing this with me."
 - d. Refer them to the appropriate services.
 - e. Avoid expressing your personal opinions or judgements, and avoid minimizing the student's situation with language like "You'll get over this," or "Everyone feels this way."