



**lyit**

Institiúid Teicneolaíochta Leitir Ceanainn  
Letterkenny Institute of Technology

## COUNSELLING SERVICE

### INFORMATION FOR LYIT STAFF

From time to time members of staff may encounter students who are very distressed. Quite often the distressed student may be underperforming academically. Sometimes the issues that are the cause of the distress in the student may be relatively minor, other cases may be more complicated. Irrespective of whether the case is minor or severe, dealing with the distressed student requires some simple skills, and knowledge of where you can refer the student for specific help.

The health and welfare of students is everyone's concern. It is important to be prepared for emergencies, but you should be aware that they occur very rarely.

### FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS FOR STAFF

#### Who is counselling for?

Counselling is available to all registered students. Each year, approx. 200 students have contact with the service.

#### Is it free?

The service is free to all registered students of LYIT

#### Is it confidential?

Yes. Counsellors will not divulge any information about students outside the service, without the students permission. The only exception to this would be if the counsellor feels there is a serious risk either to the student or to someone else.

Case notes are maintained on all students. These are kept by the counsellor and are to help them to reflect on your situation and offer the best possible help. Contact details are also kept anonymously on a database for statistical purposes only.

#### How does a student make an appointment?

Students can make an appointment by telephoning the counsellor at 074 918 6817, mobile: 087 955 5266 and leaving a short message and a contact telephone number or by contacting the student services receptionist at 074 918 6855 or email [marian.mcnulty@lyit.ie](mailto:marian.mcnulty@lyit.ie) or [counselling@lyit.ie](mailto:counselling@lyit.ie)

### **Can I arrange an appointment on behalf of a student?**

If you feel the student needs to see a counsellor, it's important to have their agreement. You can then make an appointment for them or you can encourage them to make contact with the counsellor themselves.

### **Will a student be able to see a counsellor straight away?**

We try to offer everyone a first appointment as soon as possible to talk about their needs. The counsellor will discuss with the student suitable times to meet. Because of the high demand for spaces, we would appreciate if students would let the student services receptionist know, as soon as possible, if they wish to cancel.

### **How many sessions will a student be offered?**

This varies for each individual, students may require 1-4 sessions but. In some cases this can be reviewed and further sessions offered if appropriate.

### **What information is available to take away?**

We provide self help fact sheets in our waiting area, as well as information on various organisations who can provide help. We also stock a range of booklets on a variety of mental health topics such as anxiety, stress, depression and others. These can be picked up from the waiting area at any time when the service is open.

Self-help books on a range of issues are available from the library.

### **Can I give feedback on the service?**

Yes. We encourage staff to evaluate their experience of dealing with the service and let us know what aspects they found helpful and what could be improved.

### **What about emergencies?**

Emergencies will be seen on the day.

### **Can staff attend the service for counselling?**

No. A counselling service is provided through the LYIT Human Resources Department. This service is fully confidential and no record of attendance is available to the College.

## **GUIDELINES FOR STAFF TO HELP IDENTIFY STUDENTS AT RISK AND HOW TO REFER TO COUNSELLING SERVICE**

For some students being at College can prove to be a very challenging and stressful experience. The range of supportive services provided throughout the college are significant in assisting students to cope effectively and successfully in achieving academic success and maintaining personal well being. However, there are times when more specialist intervention is required in order to address specific issues that may arise. It is at these times that a referral to the Counselling Service may be appropriate. The following guidelines on signs and symptoms that present may be helpful in making that assessment.

### SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

1. When you become concerned around **academic** issues such as:

- Inconsistent work.
- Procrastination.
- Poor attendance or performance.
- Repeated requests for extensions or special consideration.
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2. When you are conscious of marked **behavioural** changes in a student such as:

- Changes in mood or behaviour.
- Tearfulness or intense emotional expression.
- Obvious lack of emotion.
- High levels of irritability or violent outbursts.
- Notable changes in grooming-or personal hygiene.
- Dramatic weight gain or loss.
- Signs of excessive alcohol or drug use.
- Falling asleep in class.

3. When you become aware of marked changes in **interpersonal interactions** such as:

- Increased dependency on your support or others.
- Social withdrawal or isolation.
- Complaints from peers regarding the student's behaviour.
- Unexpected changes in personal relationships.

4. When you become concerned for the **student's safety** due to:

- Expressed feelings of persecution.
- Expressed feelings of hopelessness.
- References to suicide or self-destructive behaviour.

5. When you become conscious of your **own boundaries** in relation to a student's demands or issues. This may include:

- When dealing with the student is taking too much of your time.
- When you feel the student is becoming too dependent on your support.
- When you feel you are covering the same ground over and over again with the student.
- When you are unsure of what to do or how to respond.

- When you feel out of your depth.
- When the situation is depleting you of your own emotional resources.
- When your suggestions are constantly rejected.
- When no change is evident.

#### RESPONDING TO A STUDENT

When a student presents with a particular concern that you feel might best be dealt with by another service or professional it is important to note the following guidelines:

- Talk to the student in private.
- Re-assure and affirm the student for choosing to confide in you.
- Express your concerns and observations openly and in a straight forward way directly to the student.
- Explain clearly to the student what you can provide in terms of your time and the type of support you can offer.
- Inquire how the student is attempting to handle the problem.
- If a student is very upset ask if there is anyone you can contact.
- If and when a referral to counselling is appropriate or necessary express this recommendation clearly to the student. You can validate your suggestion by indicating the specific behaviours or concerns that the student has presented with. In addition you may wish to point out that the issues presented go beyond the boundaries or competency of your professional role.
- The decision to avail of counselling is always a personal choice for the student. However, providing information on the service can often help to dispel some of the myths and misconceptions that prevail about counselling. If unsure about any details please contact the counselling service or the student services receptionist and check these in the presence of the student.
- Encourage students to make appointments themselves. This ensures a degree of personal responsibility and motivation on their part. There are times however when it is important to assist a student in making the appointment. Allowing the student to phone from your office is helpful.
- In the event of a student agreeing to attend for counselling it is important that you clarify any proposed follow up either by yourself or your department. This reassures the student of your interest and can provide a comprehensive management of the situation.
- There are times when a student may refuse to attend for counselling. This decision must be respected. A student may need more time to consider this as an option. In the event of such a refusal it is important that you do not become a substitute for the professional help they may need. It may be helpful to document your interactions with the student for future reference.

#### Contacting the Counsellor

The Counselling Service is located upstairs in the Student Support Services Department in An Danlann (Multi Purpose Centre). The counsellor is available every day Monday to Friday from 9am until 5pm. There is a 'drop in' service every morning from 9.00am until 10.30am where no appointment is required and when the student can see the counsellor for a short visit.

Otherwise to make an appointment telephone the counsellor Marian McNulty at 074 91 86817 or telephone/ text 087 955 5266 or contact Brenda at the Student Services reception at 074 91 86855 or email [marian.mcnulty@lyit.ie](mailto:marian.mcnulty@lyit.ie) or [counselling@lyit.ie](mailto:counselling@lyit.ie)

Each session will last approximately 50 minutes to 1 hour. The Counsellor provides an 'out of hours' service by prior arrangement only. Emergencies will always be seen on the day.