

# MANAGING STUDENT CRISES

Mindy Metzcar and Tehanee Ratwatte  
Indiana University



# Case Example

- Graduate student in her 1<sup>st</sup> semester, mother of 3, spouse recently returned to home country. A few weeks into the semester, discovered that oldest daughter had brain tumor. Student had to have a reduced course load, but she and children wanted to remain in the US.

# The Regulations

- Under-enrollment in 1<sup>st</sup> semester:
  - Difficulties with English language/American teaching methods
  - Improper course placement
  - Documented medical issue
- Issue:
  - Not the student's medical issue, but clearly distressed
- Outcome:
  - Documented medical issue after student sought help from our counseling and psychological center

# Case Example

- Male student in his second semester of undergraduate classes. Mother became ill at home, student began having difficulties with concentration, wanting to go home. Student greatly concerned about ability to return to US.

# The Regulations

- Total withdrawal but keeping “active” SEVIS record
  - Documented medical issue for authorization to be under/not enrolled
- Issue:
  - Student had not discussed his issue with anyone and was very hesitant about receiving mental health counseling
- Outcome:
  - Offered to walk him to counseling and psychological center, then he asked me to sit in the appointment with him. Medical authorization to be not enrolled

# Case Example

- Male student in first year of study. Grandfather sick in hospital, father had heart bypass. Did not go to classes for most of semester, had been cited for alcohol issues on campus, finally came to the OIS.
- Withdrew from all classes
- Finally visited health care center and talked to professional staff
- Returning to IU after time away

# The Regulations

- Total withdrawal
  - Documented medical issue for authorization for total withdrawal from all classes
- Issue:
  - Student needed mental health counseling and also needed to meet with Student Advocates to handle grade issues
- Outcome:
  - Student sought mental health counseling and did total withdrawal for medical reason and worked with Student Advocates to handle his grades. Terminated record for authorized early withdrawal based on medical documentation.

# OIS Approach

- Remind students they can always come to OIS to talk, but professional medical care and documentation has to come from the pros
- Offer to walk with students to the health center
- To avoid the stigma of mental health counseling address physical problems that are the result of mental distress:
  - Sleep issues, eating issues, hair loss
- If a student is still questioning mental health counseling, ask them to think about:
  - Have you experienced negative changes in the way you handle academics?
  - Have you experienced negative changes in the way you interact with others?
  - Are you experiencing consequences of drug/alcohol use?
  - Have you felt bad for at least two weeks?
  - Have your friends been commenting on your mood or that you don't seem like yourself?



# Counseling Skills & Techniques

- Clarification
  - Encourages elaboration of case and confirms advisor's understanding of case and ensures student's language/slang is understood by advisor
  - Example: Asking "Are you saying..." "You said that experience was 'da bomb', what do you mean by that?"
- Paraphrase
  - Refocuses the student on the situation and feelings being discussed and by hearing the information they share with the advisor it helps the student understand their situation better
  - Example : "Because your family member is ill, you have had trouble concentrating on classes"

# Counseling Skills & Techniques

- Reflection
  - Encourages student to understand and express their feelings so they can better understand the effects of their feelings on their lives
  - Example: “You are stressed and worried about your difficulties with concentrating on classes because of your ill family member”
- Summarization
  - Ties together the components of the student’s issue and helps the student and advisor identify a theme or pattern
  - Example: “With your family member being ill and you being here in the US, you are stressed and worried and that is distracting you from succeeding in your classes this semester”

# When a Student is in Crisis

- Stay calm
- Listen; let the student get their feelings out
- Be supportive; let the student know it is courageous of them to share their situation with you
- Express concern; let the student know you want them to be safe/happy/at ease and that you want to help
- Present appropriate and reasonable options/referral

# Resources

- Counseling and psychological services at your school
- Local or state health services department
- Housing unit at your school – being on the crisis response contact list, for wellness checks
- Student advocates center/office at your school
- GLBT resource/support center at your school
- Cultural centers at your school
- Dean of Student's office at your school

# Resources

- Bursar/billing office at your school
- Student legal services at your school
- Local crisis pregnancy center
- Local women's shelter
- Local library services that might offer legal counseling or other helpful services
- 2-1-1 for 2-1-1/Information and referral for resource info on food, clothing, shelter, emergency financial assistance, childcare, health & mental health care, and legal services (<http://www.in211.org/>)
- Information, information, information (about the student, his/her friends, family, program of study, etc.)

# Recommendations

- Have resources available
- Get to know your campus's health center staff
- Address the concept of culture shock
- Talk to your colleagues
- Take care of yourself too!

# References

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- For a copy of this presentation, please email me at [mmetzcar@indiana.edu](mailto:mmetzcar@indiana.edu).