COLLEGE STUDENT MENTAL HEALTH
WHAT FACULTY NEED TO KNOW
Statistics

2012 NAMI report:
- College Students Speak: A Survey Report on Mental Health
- Demographics
  - 71% students from public or private universities
  - Current students – 59%; Recent college grads – 16%; no longer attending – 10%; Graduate students – 9%; Incoming – 7%
Types of mental illnesses in college students

- Depression
- Bipolar Disorder
- Other*
- Anxiety
- Schizophrenia
- PTSD
- ADHD
- Substance Abuse

*Borderline PD, Dysthymia, Eating Disorders, OCD, Schizoaffective, Autism SD
College Student Mental Health

- Common mental disorders
  - Mood Disorders
- Anxiety
- ADHD
College Student Mental Health

- Less common but serious mental disorders
  - Psychotic D/O’s
  - PTSD
Faculty and staff:

- First line in recognition of potential campus disruptions
  - In a unique position to identify and help students who cannot or will not turn to family and friends
  - Only 20% of students say they would seek help at their counseling center

TEAM EFFORT!
Identifying Students in Distress

- Recognition – what to look for
  - Marked changes in academic performance or behavior
  - Excessive absences/tardiness
  - Repeated requests for special consideration
  - Unusual or changed pattern of behavior
  - Avoiding participation
  - Dominating discussions
  - Excessively anxious when called upon
  - Disruptive
  - Exaggerated emotional response inappropriate to situation
  - Concentration problems
Identifying Students in Distress

- Unusual Behavior or Appearance
  - Depressed or lethargic mood
  - Hyperactivity or very rapid speech
  - Unexplained crying
  - Irritability or angry outbursts
  - Swollen/red eyes
  - Change in personal hygiene or dress
  - Dramatic weight loss/gain
  - Violent or threatening behavior
Identifying Students in Distress

- Unusual Behavior or Appearance continued
  - Strange behavior indicating loss of contact with reality
  - Incoherent, disorganized, or rambling speech
  - Disoriented (unaware of current location, date, time, ….)
Identifying Students in Distress

**WARNING SIGNS**

- References to suicide, homicide, or death
  - Expressed feelings of hopelessness or helplessness
  - Overt references to suicide
  - Isolation from friends or family
  - Homicidal threats

** References may occur in students’ verbal or written statements (essays or papers).
Identifying Students in Distress

- WARNING SIGNS CONTINUED
  - Verbal aggression
  - Violent or physical destruction
What Do I Do Now?

How to approach a student in distress

Confidentiality

FERPA FACTS – Permissible communications include:
- Observations of student behavior or statements made
- In a health and/or safety emergency, PII from educational record can be released to protect the student/others
FERPA FACTS continued:

- Information can be shared with university personnel when there is a specific need to know and should be limited to the essentials of university business
What Do I Do Now?

- Interventions in non-emergency situations
  - Talk to the student in private when unrushed and not preoccupied
  - Listen (REALLY LISTEN) to the student – give your undivided attention
  - Take it seriously
  - Validate the depth of feeling – DON’T MINIMIZE
What Do I Do Now?

- Interventions in non-emergency situations continued
  - Give hope that things can be different and there are options
  - Express your willingness to help the student explore options
  - Suggest resources
  - Refer to appropriate resource
    - Have student call the resource (e.g. Counseling Center) from your office
    - May need to walk the student to appropriate resource and introduce him/her to someone who can help with their problem
What Do I Do Now?

- Know your limits and REFER when:
  - The problem is more serious than you feel comfortable handling.
  - You are extremely busy and are unable or unwilling to handle request for help.
  - You have helped as much as you can and more assistance is needed.
  - You think that your personal feelings about the student will interfere with your objectivity.
  - The student admits there is a problem but doesn’t want to talk to you about it.
  - The student asks for or needs information or assistance that you’re unable to provide.
Seek consultation from the Counseling Center staff in order to:
- Assess the situation, its seriousness, and the potential for referral
- Learn about resources so you can suggest the most appropriate help available when talking to the student
- Find the best way to make the referral if appropriate
- Clarify your own feelings about the student and consider ways you can be most effective
- Discuss follow-up concerns after the initial action or referral
What Do I Do now?

- In an EMERGENCY involving:
  - Suicidal students
  - Verbally aggressive students
  - Violent or physically destructive students
What Do I Do Now: Suicidal Students

- Suicide is the 3rd leading cause of death among 15-24 year-olds

Myths
- People who talk about suicide will not do it
  - FACT: A majority of those who die by suicide talk about their intentions in the weeks before their death.
What Do I Do Now: Suicidal Students

- Myths continued
  - Suicide happens without warning
  - FACT: Most suicidal people give clues or talk about their suicidal feelings. Recognizing and responding to these can prevent suicide attempts and death. However, suicide is NEVER someone else’s fault.
Myths continued

- Myth: Asking about suicide will put the idea in someone’s mind.

- FACT: The idea of suicide doesn’t originate in this way. Suicidal individuals are engaged in a private struggle with thoughts of death. Talking about the possibility of suicide can alleviate the loneliness of the struggle, and can be a first step in getting help.
What Do I Do Now? Suicidal Students

- If the student expresses thoughts of suicide or other hopeless/helpless thoughts
  - ASK if he/she is feeling like harming or killing him/herself
- DON’T leave the student alone
  - Ask if they have a plan and call the appropriate campus resources
- If they do not have a plan and there is no immediate danger of student harming herself/himself
  - Call the Counseling Center
  - Arrange for assistance in covering your class and walk the student to the Counseling Center
What Do I Do Now: Verbally Aggressive Student

- Verbal aggression usually results when students are in frustrating situations that they feel are out of their control.

- **Do:**
  - Speak in a calm manner and decrease the volume of your speech
  - Acknowledge their anger
  - Allow them to ventilate and tell you what is upsetting them
  - Invite student to your office or other quiet place **IF** you feel comfortable doing so. **Trust Your Gut!**
  - Tell them you are not willing to tolerate their verbal abuse
  - Tell them they are violating your personal space (if getting physically close)
  - Help them problem-solve and deal with the real issues when they calm down
What Do I Do Now: Verbally Aggressive Student

Don’t:
- Get into an argument or shouting match
- Escalate the situation by becoming hostile or punitive yourself
- Press for an explanation for their behavior
- Look away and not deal with the situation
Violence, because of emotional distress, is infrequent and typically occurs only when the student is completely frustrated and feels unable to do anything about it.

**Do:**
- Prevent total frustration/helplessness by quickly and calmly acknowledging the intensity of the situation
- Explain clearly and directly what behaviors are acceptable
- Stay in open areas but try to get person away from others
- Divert attention when all else fails
- Get necessary help (other staff, LSUS-PD, Counseling Center)
What Do I Do Now: Violent or Physically Destructive Student

Don’t:

- Ignore warning signs that the person is about to explode
- Threaten, dare, taunt, or push the student into a corner
- Touch the student
Campus resources

- **Counseling Center**
  - In Student Development-Administration Bldg., Room 230
  - 797-5365

- **LSU-S Police**
  - #999 from campus phone
  - 318-455-5497 from cell phone
  - Emergency procedures:

- **Student Affairs**
  - Dr. Butterbaugh – 797-5116
Outside resources

- Shreveport Emergency number
  - Police, Fire Department, or for Medical Emergency
    - 9,911 from campus phone
    - 911 from cell phone
References and Other Helpful Websites

- **Suicide Hotline**
  - 1-800-273-8255
  - [http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org](http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org)

- **Jed Foundation**
  - Promoting emotional health and preventing suicide in college students
  - [http://www.jedfoundation.org](http://www.jedfoundation.org)

- **Ulifeline**
  - Mental health resources for college students
  - [www.ulifeline.org](http://www.ulifeline.org)
Questions/discussion