

Summary of some of the effective Counseling options at Medical Schools

1)Sunny Upstate

We have a psychiatrist who is available usually the same day or the next one. He sees the students at a facility near by campus, but not on campus so there is not that I'm-sitting-in-the-psych-waiting-room-as-all-my-classmates-walk-by feeling. He generally keeps only the bare minimum private records of the student visits and never ever includes a diagnosis in these records. He feels that one of the major reasons medical students don't seek help is that they are afraid that if in the future someone ever found out that a psychiatrist it may be used against them, possibly in court, has treated them. If medications are needed, he tries his best to provide samples, this way the students don't have to worry about there being insurance records of their treatment.

We do have prescription coverage with the school's plan and if long-term therapy is necessary, then it goes through insurance. He is also very good at setting students up with psychiatrists in the area that are in no way associated with the school, because some students still feel uncomfortable seeing someone around the hospital that also treats them.

This system works very well here. He introduces himself at orientation and all the students remember his presentation and the service his office provides. His services are widely utilized by the students across the years.

2)University of Iowa

We have a counseling with 2 fulltime counselors. They do personal counseling, career counseling, academic advising and a tutoring program. There is also a peer-mentoring program. I think that many students use their services at some point in their medical career. The office is separate from, but near, the main offices for the deans and other administration branches. Since the services are pretty diverse, students do not have feel like they are "on display" if they are there for a personal problem. If students would like to use non-College of Medicine services, our university has a Counseling Center in the nearby student health building. All students can use their services for a certain length of time (and I think most long-term care is handled at the university center instead of within the college).

3) U.PENN

Medical students have the same access to the entire university's counseling and psychiatric services as all of the undergraduates do.

4) Baylor College

Baylor College of Medicine offers up to 12 sessions of psychiatric counseling at no charge to students along with a 24-hour answering service. Please see http://www.bcm.tmc.edu/osa/handbook/psychiatric_counseling.html for more info.

5) UCSF

We have a great student well-being program at UCSF. The majority of students in medicine are well informed about the services and many students use it.

<http://medschool.ucsf.edu/studentwellbeing/index.asp>

6) Medical College of Wisconsin

All medical students are allotted 8 free Mental Health visits each year. Every effort is made to get students in for an appt. within 48 hrs of the request, or sooner, depending upon the level of urgency. Students can see psychologists or psychiatrists that are not directly involved in medical educating, thereby limiting problems with confidentiality.

7) University of Washington

We have 3 counselors who work a great deal with students. They typically teach parts of the clinical medicine courses having to do with interviewing and sensitivity and therefore, the students know them well long before they seek them for a counseling problem. In addition, they run lots of groups--e.g. students with kids, gay/lesbian students, older students, etc. At the beginning of the first year they make appointments with all students for a "get to know you" meeting. Overall the program is a large success.

8) University of Utah

We have a school psychologist that students and their spouses are able to use for free, anonymously. It is not run through the Dean's office, but through the family practice department for more confidentiality. He is available all week.

9) University of Kansas

We have two full time and one part time counselors. There is also a "learning specialist" that serves as a counselor for those that are having problems taking tests, studying, etc. I think they are hiring another in the learning specialist category due to the large workload.

10) University of Arkansas

We have a very well put together psychiatric support network with 3 full time psychiatrists and a full time masters in psychology. We are encouraged to take advantage of the services; they are free to students, even from freshman orientation week. The head of the department comes and gives an hour-long lecture about how our minds are just as important as the rest of our bodies and we need to keep it healthy. She also comes and speaks to us periodically to remind us of the services. She comes to parent's day and relates the stresses incurred in medical school to them because sometimes it's better to hear it from a professor than your own child's mouth.

The only problem is that they are booked up for at least a week in advance if not more. The statistics here are that at least one in four medical students go to mental health at least once in their medical career.