



Triage

(<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/practicenotes/triage.pdf>)

Given schools never have enough resources for all the students who need special assistance, processing such students inevitably involves a form of gatekeeping -- referred to in clinical circles as triage. A paradox related to this is that the better a school develops processes for problem identification and student review, the greater the number of students sent for review. We call this the "field of dreams" effect. (Build it and they will come.)

Ideally, a school will stem the tide of students sent for review by enhancing its prevention practices (e.g., welcoming and providing social supports and ensuring that students make a good adjustment to a new school and/or a new classroom). And, increasing emphasis on well-designed prereferral interventions and response to intervention strategies will cut down on the need for special assistance outside the classroom.

When referrals are made to on-site resources, it falls to the school to decide which students need immediate attention and which can be put on a waiting list. Working alone or on a team, student support personnel usually play a key role in making this determination.

Triage Processing

- a. Review submitted forms each day, sort, and direct them to appropriate resources (Designate and train a triage processor; several individuals can share this task; for example, different persons can do it on a specific day or for specified weeks.)
- b. After the sorting is done, send a Status Information Form to the person who identified the problem (assuming it was not a self referral).

To further stem the tide of students sent for review, those who process the requests need to spend some time

- analyzing the general nature of the problems being sent with a view to identifying changes in the classroom and school that could minimize the need for similar requests in the future
- helping develop and implement the changes.

ABOUT THE CENTER FOR MENTAL HEALTH IN SCHOOLS at UCLA

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