

Tools to Facilitate Triage

Info Aid: Helping Students with Psychosocial Problems Seek Help

Triage Review Request Form

Info Aid: Being Alert to Indicators of Psychosocial and Mental Health Problems

Info Aid: Being Specifically Alert to Substance Abuse Indicators

**Initial Interview Forms: Student's View of the Problem
(age appropriate versions)**

Note: The Center's Resource Aid Packet on *Screening/Assessment: Indicators and Tools* contains related materials such as aids for initial problem identification and guides to understanding the screening process. Other Center resources explore issues related to screening.

Helping Students With Psychosocial Problems Seek Help

Students with mental health needs are identified by

- self
- center medical staff
- counselors, school nurse, psychologist, or other school personnel
- family
- peers

If a student indicates s/he has a problem and you think it should be screened by a mental health professional, you can help by doing the following:

Inform and Reassure

Uncertain students often need more information; they also may need reassurance that they won't be coerced into doing something they don't want to do.

- (a) Tell the student that the center (e.g., mental health professional) or other school personnel (e.g., counselors, nurse, psychologist) will be glad to explain about available programs that can help.
- (b) Stress that no one will try to pressure the student to do anything s/he doesn't want to do. No one will try to make her or him participate in any mental health service. The decision is always the students.

Guide Students to Help

(a) If the student doesn't have parental consent to use the center, explain how s/he should go about getting consent. (Consent forms are available at the health center office.)

OR

If the student doesn't want to go to the center or says s/he can't get consent to do so, explain that other school personnel (such as counselors, the school nurse or psychologist) can provide information about services.

(a) Explain to the student how to go about initiating contact (with the center or other school personnel) for a screening interview. Provide as much support and direction as the student appears to need to initiate this contact (including making certain they know the way to the right office, hours of service, arranging for a summons or a pass, and so forth).

(b) If feasible, follow-up with the student to see whether a contact was made. If contact was not made, try to determine whether additional support and direction is needed to help the student make the contact. (For some students, you might ask if they would like you to make the initial contact and have an appointment arranged for them.)

If the student is not ready to self-initiate contact and you feel s/he should be interviewed anyway, inform the appropriate professional at the school.

Triage Review Request Form

(Request for Assistance in Addressing Concerns about a Student/Family)

Extensive assessment is not necessary in initially identifying a student about whom you are concerned. Use this form if a student is having a *significant* learning problem, a *major* behavior problem, or seems *extremely* disturbed or disabled.

Student's Name _____ Date: _____

To: _____ Title: _____

From: _____ Title: _____

Apparent problem (check all that apply):

___ physical health problem (specify) _____

___ difficulty in making a transition

() newcomer having trouble with school adjustment () trouble adjusting to new program

___ social problems

() aggressive () shy () overactive () other _____

___ achievement problems

() poor grades () poor skills () low motivation () other _____

___ major psychosocial or mental health concern

() drug/alcohol abuse () pregnancy prevention/support () self esteem
() depression/suicide () eating problems (anorexia, bulim.) () relationship problems
() grief () physical/sexual abuse () anxiety/phobia
() dropout prevention () neglect () disabilities
() gang involvement () reactions to chronic illness

Other specific concerns

Current school functioning and desire for assistance

Overall academic performance

() above grade level () at grade level () slightly below grade level () well below grade level

Absent from school

() less than once/month () once/month () 2-3 times/month () 4 or more times/month

Has the student/family asked for:

information about service	Y	N
an appointment to initiate help	Y	N
someone to contact them to offer help	Y	N

If you have information about the cause of a problem or other important factors related to the situation, briefly note the specifics here (use the back of the sheet if necessary).

Information Aid

Being Alert to Indicators of Psychosocial and Mental Health Problems*

No one should be overzealous in seeing normal variations in student's development and behavior as problems. At the same time, school professionals don't want to ignore indicators of significant problems. The following are meant only to sensitize responsible professionals. They should not be seen as a check list.

If a student is of significant concern, a request should be made to an appropriate person on the school staff who can do some further screening/assessment.

If they occur frequently and in a variety of situations and appear rather serious when you compare the behavior with other students the same age, the following behaviors may be symptomatic of significant problems.

Emotional appearance

(Emotions seem excessive. Displays little affect. Very rapid shifts in emotional state.)

very unhappy, sad, teary, depressed, indicates a sense of worthlessness, hopelessness, helplessness

very anxious, shy

very afraid, fearful

can't seem to control emotions

doesn't seem to have feelings

Personal Actions

(Acts in ways that are troublesome or troubling)

very immature

frequent outbursts/temper tantrums, violent

often angry

cruel to animals

sleep problems and/or nightmares

wetting/soiling at school

easily distracted

impulsive

steals

lies often

cheats often

destroys things

accident prone

unusual, strange, or immature speech patterns

often doesn't seem to hear

hurts self, self-abusive

easily becomes overexcited truancy, school

avoidance

trouble learning and performing eating problems

sets fires

ritualistic behavior

seizures

isolates self from others

complains often about physical aches and pains

unaccounted for weight loss

substance abuse

runs away

Interactions with others

(Doesn't seem interested in others. Can't interact appropriately or effectively with others.)

doesn't pay attention
cruel and bullying
highly manipulative
alienates others
has no friends

refuses to talk
promiscuous
excessively reactive and resistant to
authority
highly aggressive to others --
physically, sexually

Indicators of Unusual Thinking

(Has difficulty concentrating. May express very strange thoughts and ideas.)

worries a lot
doesn't stay focused on matters
can't seem to concentrate on much

preoccupied with death
seems to hear or see things, delusional

*Additional indicators for problems (such as depression in young people) are available through a variety of resources – for example, see the various gateways available on the website of the Center for Mental Health in Schools at UCLA. <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu>

Information Aid – *Being Specifically Alert to Substance Abuse Indicators*

It is essential to remember that many of the symptoms of substance abuse are common characteristics of young people, especially in adolescence. This means *extreme caution* must be exercised to avoid misidentifying and inappropriately stigmatizing a youngster. *Never* overestimate the significance of a few indicators.

The type of indicators usually identified are

- a *prevailing pattern* of unusual and excessive behaviors and moods
- recent *dramatic* changes in behavior and mood.

School staff and those in the home need to watch for

- poor school performance; skipping or ditching school
- inability to cope well with daily events
- lack of attention to hygiene, grooming, and dress
- long periods alone in bedroom/bathroom apparently doing nothing
- extreme defensiveness; negative attitudes; dissatisfied about most things; argumentative
- frequent conflicts with others; verbally/physically abusive
- withdrawal from long-time friends/family/activities
- disregard for others; extreme egocentricity
- taking up with new friends who may be drug users
- unusual tension or depressed states
- seems frequently confused and "spacey"
- often drowsy
- general unresponsiveness to what's going on (seems "turned off")
- increasing need for money; disappearance of possessions (e.g., perhaps sold to buy drugs); stealing/shoplifting
- excessive efforts to mislead (lying, conning, untrustworthy, insincere)
- stooped appearance and posture
- dull or watery eyes; dilated or pinpoint pupils
- sniffles; runny nose
- overt indicators of substance abuse (e.g., drug equipment, needle marks)

In the period just after an individual has used drugs, one might notice mood and behavioral swings – first euphoria, perhaps some unusual activity and/or excessive talking, sometimes a tendency to appear serene, after a while there may be a swing toward a depressed state and withdrawal. Sometimes the individual will stare, glassy-like at one thing for a long time.

To be more specific about a few indicators of abuse categorized by some common substances that are abused:

Amphetamines (stimulants)

excessive activity	fatigue
rapid speech	disorientation and confusion
irritability	increased blood pressure and body temp.
appetite loss	increased respiration
anxiety	increased and irregular pulse
extreme moods and shifts	tremors
erratic eating and sleeping patterns	

Cocaine (stimulant, anesthetic)

short-lived euphoria followed by depression	fever
nervousness and anxiety	tremors
irritability	tightening muscles
shallow breathing	

Inhalants

euphoria	headaches
intoxicated look	fainting
odors	poor muscle control
nausea	rapid heartbeat
drowsiness	anemia
stupor	choking

Cannabinoids (e.g., marijuana, hash, THC)

increased appetite initially	rapid flow of ideas
decreased appetite with chronic use	anxiety; panic
euphoria	irritability, restlessness
decreased motivation for many activities	decreased motor skill coordination
apathy, passivity	characteristic odor on breath and clothes
decreased concentration	increased pulse rate
altered sense of time and space	droopy, bloodshot eyes
inappropriate laughter	irregular menses

Narcotics (e.g., opium, heroin, morphine, codeine, methadone, and other pain killers)

extreme mood swings	watery eyes/pinpoint pupils
poor concentration	lethargy
confusion	weight loss
insensitivity to pain	decreased blood pressure
drowsiness/decreased respiration	possible needle marks
slow, shallow breathing	as drug wears off nausea & runny nose
decreased motor coordination	itchiness

Barbiturates, sedatives, tranquilizers (CNS depressants)

decreased alertness	erratic eating and sleeping patterns
intoxicated look	dizzy
drowsy	cold, clammy skin
decreased motor coordination	decreased respiration and pulse
slurred speech	dilated pupils
confused	depressed mood state
extreme mood swings	disinhibition

Hallucinogens (affecting perceptions; e.g., PCP, LSD, mescaline)

extreme mood alteration and intensification	tremors
altered perceptions of time, space, sights, sounds, colors	nausea
loss of sense of time, place, person	flashbacks
decreased communication	increased blood pressure
panic and anxiety	impaired speech
paranoia	impaired motor coordination
extreme, unstable behaviors	motor agitation
restlessness	decreased response to pain
	watery eyes

(For use with all but very young students)

Student's View of the Problem -- Initial Interview Form

Interviewer _____

Date _____

Note the identified problem:

Is the student seeking help? Yes No

If not, what were the circumstances that brought the student to the interview?

Questions for student to answer:

Student's Name _____ Age _____ Birthdate _____

Sex: M F Grade _____ Current Placement _____

Ethnicity _____ Primary Language _____

We are concerned about how things are going for you. Our talk today will help us to discuss what's going O.K. and what's not going so well. If you want me to keep what we talk about secret, I will do so -- except for those things that I need to discuss with others in order to help you.

- (1) How would you describe your current situation? What problems are you experiencing?
What are your main concerns?

- (2) How serious are these matters for you at this time?

1
very
serious

2
serious

3
Not too
serious

4
Not at
all serious

- (3) How long have these been problems?

___ 0-3 months

___ 4 months to a year

___ more than a year

(4) What do you think originally caused these problems?

(5) Do others (parents, teachers, friends) think there were other causes?
If so, what they say they were?

(6) What other things are currently making it hard to deal with the problems?

(7) What have you already tried in order to deal with the problems?

(8) Why do you think these things didn't work?

(9) What have others advised you to do?

(10) What do you think would help solve the problems?

(11) How much time and effort do you want to put into solving the problems?

1	2	3	4	5	6
not at all	not much	only a	more than little bit	quite a bit a little bit	very much

If you answered 1, 2, or 3, why don't you want to put much time and effort into solving problems?

(12) What type of help do you want?

(13) What changes are you hoping for?

(14) How hopeful are you about solving the problems?

1	2	3	4
very hopeful	somewhat	not too	not at all hopeful

If you're not hopeful, why not?

(15) What else should we know so that we can help?

Are there any other matters you want to discuss?

(For use with very young students)

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- (1) Are you having problems at school? ___Yes ___No
If yes, what's wrong?

What seems to be causing these problems?

(2) How much do you like school?

1	2	3	4	5	6
not at all	not much	only a little bit	more than a little bit	Quite a bit	Very much

What about school don't you like?

What can we do to make it better for you?

(3) Are you having problems at home? ___Yes ___No
If yes, what's wrong?

What seems to be causing these problems?

(4) How much do you like things at home?

1	2	3	4	5	6
not at all	not much	only a	more than a little bit	Quite a bit little bit	Very much

What about things at home don't you like?

What can we do to make it better for you?

(5) Are you having problems with other kids? ___Yes ___No
If yes, what's wrong?

What seems to be causing these problems?

(6) How much do you like being with other kids?

1	2	3	4	5	6
not at all	not much	only a	more than a little bit	Quite a bit little bit	Very much

What about other kids don't you like?

What can we do to make it better for you?

(7) What type of help do you want?

(8) How hopeful are you about solving the problems?

1	2	3	4
very hopeful	somewhat	not too	not at all hopeful

If you're not hopeful, why not?

(9) What else should we know so that we can help?

Are there any other things you want to tell me or talk about?