

**ALLEN COLLEGE – UNITYPOINT HEALTH  
STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE**

Supersedes: 4/15, 2/19

No: 2-E-800-03

Last Date: November 2023

Required Review Date: April 2027

Administrative Unit: Enrollment Management

Approved By:

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Jared Seliger, PhD, CNMT  
President

**SUBJECT:** Referral of Allen College students to the Employee Assistance Program at Allen Hospital (the EAP)

**PURPOSE:** To establish a protocol for referring students in need of counseling assistance.

**EFFECTIVE FOR:** All Allen College faculty and staff

**DEFINITIONS:**

Informal Referral:

In an Informal Referral, a faculty/staff member informs the student of the availability of EAP services and recommends the use of the EAP as a source of support and confidential assistance. The student makes the decision whether to go to EAP. An Informal Referral is made if the student is experiencing an unhealthy, but non-crisis, level of stress as indicated by the signs and symptoms observed. This stress may be related to academic issues, personal issues, or both. After the initial assessment session in EAP, the student may pursue short-term counseling with EAP or be referred to another appropriate resource for assistance. All student contacts with EAP are confidential; no one, including the referring person, will know if the student chooses to use EAP unless the student shares that information. Students may also self-refer with the same assurance of confidentiality.

Crisis Situation: Whether or not a situation is a crisis is dependent on how the individual reacts to the situation. A crisis is “a perception or experience of an event or situation as an intolerable difficulty that exceeds [or challenges] the person’s current resources and coping mechanisms” (James & Gilliland, 2001). Examples of a crisis situation include the person being a harm to themselves or others, the person is experiencing extreme distress such as a panic attack, or the person’s behavior could be viewed as distressing or disturbing (Youth Mental Health First Aid, 2016).

Mandatory Referral

A Mandatory Referral is made when:

- a faculty or staff member observes or suspects that there is imminent risk to the student’s health and safety or the health and safety of another (e.g., suicidal or homicidal references or threats are made) or
- there is reasonable suspicion that the student is in violation of the Drug-free Campus policy.

Formal Referral:

In a Formal Referral, a faculty/staff member requests that the student use the EAP for counseling assistance. The student chooses whether to comply with the request, but their decision will not be confidential.

A Formal Referral is made:

- when the student is displaying signs of a crisis situation or mental health issues not involving imminent risk or a drug-free campus violation,
- as a part of a behavioral contract or as a contingency for remaining in or returning to class, or
- when there is danger of attrition or academic failure.

Both the mandatory referral and the formal referral usually require three EAP sessions to address the student's personal issues, develop a plan of action, make appropriate referrals outside of EAP (if needed), and monitor the student's progress. The referral is intended to ensure that the student has the help that is needed to be successful.

When either type of referral is made, the referring individual should complete the Faculty/Staff referral form attached to this policy with the student, set goals for the EAP intervention and fax the form to EAP (319-235-3642). In addition, send a copy of all academic-related referrals to the dean of the appropriate school (nursing/health sciences); for non-academic referrals, send a copy to the dean of enrollment management. Inform the student of the following expectations:

- the time frame for making the appointment with EAP;
- that a release of information will be signed in EAP, allowing the EAP staff to confirm that the student has made and kept the appointment;
- to whom this information will be given; and
- that three appointments should be anticipated.

The EAP feedback to the appropriate dean will include the following:

1. the dates and times that the student attended EAP;
2. verification that the problem areas and goals identified by the referring individual were addressed in the EAP sessions;
3. verification of whether the student was provided a plan of action—specific recommendations/referrals are not disclosed ; and
4. verification of whether the student plans to comply or has complied with any recommended referral outside of EAP.

**POLICY:** An Allen College faculty or staff member should refer a student to the counseling services available at the EAP when it is determined that the student is showing signs of distress or imminent risk that would be appropriately addressed by and responsive to professional counseling services.

Allen College enlists the services of the EAP to provide a professional and confidential setting for the psychological, emotional, and developmental support of students as they pursue their academic goals. The EAP will also act as a resource for faculty and staff members and assist them in their interactions with students. This partnership between Allen College and the EAP will enhance the quality of the students' experiences at Allen College by supporting their academic and personal success.

### Identifying Students in Distress

Some of the signs of distress that faculty and staff should be aware of and watchful for are listed below. Signs of distress are not limited to this list and may be only a subtle change that you notice in your interactions with the student.

Academic Performance:

- Drop in class attendance or academic performance
- Incapacitating test anxiety
- Severe reaction to a poor test or quiz score
- Academic probation
- Clingy behavior; student makes excessive appointments to see you during office hours
- Late assignments or requests for extensions of due dates

Life Circumstance and Personal Concerns:

- Death or serious illness of family member or friend
- Relationship breakup, involving self or a family member
- Culture-related difficulties (isolation, discrimination)
- Problems with roommates
- Severe homesickness
- Feelings of helplessness, hopelessness, or worthlessness
- References to suicide or homicide
- Disruptive classroom behavior
- Alcohol or drug use/abuse
- Self-injurious behavior or engaging in behaviors that involve significant risk of personal injury

**PROCEDURE:**

When you note student behaviors that suggest that the student is in distress, ask the student to visit with you privately. You can follow the action plan ALGEE to assist you in this process: Assess for risk of suicide or harm, Listen nonjudgmentally, Give reassurance and information, Encourage appropriate professional help, and Encourage self-help and other support strategies (Youth Mental Health First Aid, 2016).

The first step is to assess and communicate with the student. During this conversation, express your concern for the student and offer examples of the behaviors you have noted. For example, "I have noticed that you have not been participating in class discussions lately, your quiz scores have dropped, and you look like you are feeling down. I am concerned about these changes."

If the student discloses a problem, allow him/her to discuss it openly. Convey your support by listening in a calm, nonjudgmental, and encouraging manner. Let the student know that there are professionals available to assist him/her.

If you are unsure about whether to refer a student, call the EAP (319-235-3550) and ask to speak to a counselor regarding your concerns. A consultation with an EAP staff member is usually available within one business day, and this person will assist you in making decisions about how to be most helpful to the student in the current situation.

If your consultation questions are of a more urgent nature and you feel that the student is in a crisis situation, inform the EAP receptionist that your concerns require immediate attention.

**Referral in a crisis situation that does not involve imminent danger of harm or a Drug-free Campus violation (Formal Referral)**

If conversation with the student reveals that there is no imminent danger to self or others, but the student is in crisis and should be seen as soon as possible by a counselor at the EAP, express your desire to assist the student in managing his/her current stressors and offer to help the student to make an appointment with EAP.

*If the student agrees*, call EAP and ask to set up a crisis session, giving a brief description of the student's issues. Offer to walk the student over to EAP or ask someone else to do so.

*If the student refuses referral to EAP*, you cannot mandate a referral in a situation that does not involve imminent danger and is not in violation of any Allen policies (e.g., the Drug Free Campus policy). Offer what support you can to the student and discuss available options. Continue to encourage the student to seek assistance, and offer to help the student to do so.

**Referral in a crisis involving imminent danger or Drug-free Campus violation (Mandatory Referral)**

If the conversation reveals that the student is in imminent danger of harming either self or someone else, express not only your concern for the student and her/his safety but also your eagerness to help the student seek help in dealing with the stress s/he is under. Ask the student to remain with you while you place a call to get her/him some help. Call 911 and ask for assistance in transferring the student to the Emergency Department (ED) for evaluation. Stay with the student until s/he is handed off to the EMTs. If you are able to do so and feel that the student would benefit from your presence, offer to go to the ED with the student. Notify your executive leader or dean of the situation and of the transfer to the hospital ED.

When this student returns to campus or makes contact with the college to arrange for return or readmission, a formal referral should be made to the EAP. EAP can be a valuable resource to (a) ensure that the student has any ongoing support that is needed for academic success, (b) monitor the student's compliance with any recommended post-discharge appointments and treatments, and (c) continue monitoring the student's ongoing mental status.

A violation of the policy Maintaining a Drug-free Campus (2-D-800-01) will result in a mandatory referral of the student to EAP. Students are subject to the disciplinary actions set forth by the Allen Hospital policy 3-D-20-0, Maintaining a Drug-Free Workplace, which states that "failure to use the EAP after such a violation may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination" (Sec. E, 1). When a mandatory referral is made, the student should be informed that participation in EAP services, including visits and follow-up, is required as a condition of continued enrollment at the College.

If at any time you feel threatened by the student, try to have a second person present when you are talking to the student about the situation and planning for transfer to the ED. This will also prevent the student being left alone if you need to leave your office.

**When you are speaking with a student about a referral to EAP, remember the following points:**

- Assure the student that counseling is CONFIDENTIAL. A student's involvement with EAP will not be disclosed unless the student signs a release of information to provide outlined information to specified individuals.
- Assure the student that asking for help is a sign of strength and maturity rather than weakness.
- If the student feels that his/her problem is too small to warrant "bothering" a counselor, assure the student that counselors meet with students for all kinds of concerns—large and small.
- Refer to the situation as one involving stress as opposed to mental illness. For example, say, "From what you have told me, I can tell that you are under a lot of stress. We have counselors at the EAP who are trained to help students to deal with this type of stress. Can I help you to make an appointment to see a counselor?" "Stress" may be seen as less threatening and negative than references to mental health or psychological problems.

**To make a mandatory or formal referral to EAP, the faculty/staff member should take the following actions:**

- Fill out the Referral form and fax it to EAP. (See attachment to this policy). Ideally, this form should be filled out with the student's collaboration and input.
- Indicate whether the Referral is *Mandatory* or *Formal*.
- Send a copy of the referral form to the appropriate dean.
- Follow up with the student after two weeks to ask how he/she is doing in the following areas. (You may want to make the appointment for follow-up at the time of the referral.)
  - Did the student make and keep an appointment with EAP?
    - An EAP representative will notify the appropriate dean when all three required meetings have taken place.
  - Is the student continuing to experience difficulties?
  - Has the original problem escalated, requiring additional action?
  - Have the difficulties begun to affect the student's academic standing?

Per policy, if the student has not complied with a Mandatory or Formal Referral within 30 days, the EAP will inform the appropriate dean and other specified individuals. If the student has complied with the referral and has signed a release of information, EAP will communicate with the specified individuals after the first and third sessions unless indicated otherwise.

**Employee Assistance Program Contact Information**

Amanda Schara, Manager

Phone: (319) 235-3550 Toll free: 1-800-303-9996

Fax: (319) 235-3642

Location: Allen Hospital, first floor, Entrance 6A

First office on the left after going through the automatic doors

Hours: 8 a.m. – 8 p.m., Monday through Thursday; 8 a.m. – 3 p.m., Friday

*Evening appointments available as well as virtual appointments by phone, tablet, or computer.*

## **Allen College Faculty/Staff-initiated Formal Referral of a Student to the Employee Assistance Program at Allen Hospital**

**This referral is** (check one of the following)

- Mandatory (there is danger to self or others or a violation of the Drug-free Campus policy)
- Formal

The following information will be shared with the individual(s) to whom information is released:

- Verification that the student met with the counselor (appointment times/dates)
- Verification that problem areas and expected goals, identified on the referral form, were addressed in EAP sessions.
- Verification of whether the student was provided with a recommended plan of action, but not the specifics of the plan.
- Verification of whether the employee planned to complete or had already completed any recommended referral outside of EAP.

**Name of student:** \_\_\_\_\_ (please print)

**Description and time frame of problematic behavior:**

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**Describe any actions that have been taken, the dates of intervention, and the outcomes:**

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**What are this student's strengths?**

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**List the behavioral change goal(s) for or desired outcomes of EAP intervention (to be established with the student):**

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**Release(s) should be signed to**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of executive leader and contact information

\_\_\_\_\_  
Other

**The student has been made aware of the following:** (check if they have been completed)

- The behavioral change goal(s)
- The deadline for having the appointment: by \_\_\_\_\_ (mm/dd/yy)
  - The time frame should not exceed a 2-week period.
- The need for signing an EAP release or releases of information and to whom information will be released
- The d executive leader will be informed of the student's compliance or lack of compliance with the EAP appointment(s).
- The executive leader will be informed if the student fails to comply with recommended follow-up.
- Three sessions with EAP should be anticipated.
- For a mandatory referral, participation in EAP services, including visits and follow-up, is required as a condition of continued enrollment at the College.

Signature of referring individual: \_\_\_\_\_

Printed name: \_\_\_\_\_

Position/Relationship to student: \_\_\_\_\_