



Referral Guide

As a faculty member, you are a great resource for the Center for Cadet Counseling. Cadets most often initially reach out to friends, advisors, religious and spiritual leaders, faculty, and family members, confiding in those closest to them when they are having difficulties. As advisors and faculty members, you may be a cadet's first line of contact when seeking help and you are in a position to recognize signs of distress and guide them to seek help.

The Center for Cadet Counseling created this brochure to help you identify signs of distress in a cadet. Our hope is for you to feel empowered to reach out when you notice a cadet struggling, to offer support, and help them get connected with supportive resources. Data from across our nation suggests that increasing numbers of students are presenting with issues that require additional time and resources. Faculty work closely with cadets each day and are often the first to notice changes in behavior, mood, and appearance. This is where you serve an important role within our VMI community.



Confidentiality:

Counseling records are strictly confidential. Written authorization from the cadet is required before counseling records may be released.

Federal and state laws govern the circumstances under which information may be released, as well as exceptions permitting parental notification and coordination of safety plans in the event of an emergency.

Confidentiality does not limit what you can tell us.



EMERGENCIES:

An emergency consists of imminent harm to self or others. In these situations, call 911 immediately to access emergency services. For other psychological crises or urgent concerns after hours, you can access the VMI Infirmary at (540) 464-7667.

Center for Cadet Counseling



Referral Guide for VMI Faculty



Center for Cadet Counseling
Virginia Military Institute
448 Institute Hill
Lexington, VA
www.vmi.edu/counseling
540-464-7667

Common Signs and Symptoms of Distress

- **CHANGES IN PERSONALITY AND/OR BEHAVIOR** (e.g., noticeably sad, irritable, anxious, indecisive, apathetic, etc.)
- **CHANGES IN ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE** (e.g., skipping classes, failing grades, falling behind, etc.)
- **RECENT LOSS** (e.g., ending of a relationship, death of an important person, experiencing a traumatic event, etc.)
- **WITHDRAWAL FROM OTHERS AND PREVIOUSLY ENJOYED ACTIVITIES.**
- **HELPLESSNESS/HOPELESSNESS** (e.g., cadet may be unable to see a day when things will get better; feels like nothing will ever change).
- **CHANGES IN EATING AND SLEEPING PATTERNS** (e.g., loss of or increased appetite) and/or sleeping habits (e.g., insomnia or oversleeping).
- **ABUSE OF ALCOHOL AND/OR DRUGS,** especially when the substance leads to antagonistic, impulsive, reckless and/or violent behavior.
- **TALKING ABOUT HARMING SELF OR OTHERS.** All such statements and actions must be taken seriously and requires immediate action; dial 911 for Post Police who will help the cadet get connected with needed resources.



Responding & Referring a Cadet

If you notice any of these signs and symptoms, approach the cadet to discuss your concerns.

Speak directly to the cadet about your concern, preferably in a private place.

It is important to remember that talking with someone does not mean judging, attacking, or blaming; it means finding the courage to express what you've noticed, your concerns, and your willingness to offer support.

Talk about why you are approaching the cadet and what you hope will and won't happen as a result.

Example: I'm really worried about how sad and depressed you've been. I'm hoping that you'll listen to what I have to say and not blow me off, because I really want to find a way to help you start to feel better.

Be specific about the behaviors you've observed that have caused your concern.

Clearly stating your observations in a nonjudgmental way makes it more difficult for the person to deny that a problem exists and also lets the person know that you care enough to notice.

Express your feelings about the cadet's situation.

Ex. "I'm really worried about you. I've been a bit nervous to approach you, because it seems like you don't believe you have a problem. At the same time, I feel that, as your professor, I need to share my concerns with you and encourage you to take advantage

of resources here at VMI that could help you."

Recognize the value of emotional release and encourage the cadet to 'talk it out.' Ask direct questions.

Don't be afraid to ask the cadet if they are having thoughts of harming themselves. You will not be 'putting ideas into their heads' by doing so. Most distressed cadets will be relieved by such an up-front approach.

Be a good listener.

Even if you do not agree with his/her view, the important part is that the cadet feels heard and understood.

A few tips:

Your objective is to listen, not solve the cadet's problems.

Ask open-ended questions. "Tell me more about..."

Check your understanding of what the cadet is saying. In your own words, reflect what you have heard him/her say.

Offer alternatives and establish hope.

Recommend that the student meet with a counselor at the CCC.

CALL THE CCC (540-464-7667) IF AT ANY POINT YOU AREN'T SURE WHAT TO DO. WE WILL CONSULT WITH YOU ABOUT THE SITUATION AND HELP DEVELOP A PLAN TO APPROPRIATELY ADDRESS IT.