

Referral Guide for Off-Campus Psychological Services

MCPHS University Counseling Services

Your Referral to Private Care

This document is intended to guide you in the process of getting connected to the off-campus mental health services you need. MCPHS University's Counseling Services offers short-term, in-house psychological services. When students require ongoing, long-term, specialized, and/or psychiatric treatment, they are referred to an off-campus provider. Your student insurance or private insurance can help you cover the cost of such care. If you do not have in-state insurance, the Counseling Services staff is aware of several local treatment facilities and private practitioners who offer service for a reduced fee.

FAQs – Frequently Asked Questions

Will my health insurance pay for off-campus care including medication?

Health insurance, whether through a student or a private plan, can often help with the cost of off-campus psychological services. The best source for information about your coverage and benefits is your insurer.

Why can't I see a clinician/psychiatrist on campus?

Counseling Services provides short-term care to students in part due to the volume of students served. For ongoing or specialized care, as well as access to services not available at Counseling Services (e.g. psychiatric care, hospitalization, medication, etc.), we refer our students into the community. Although students may feel that ongoing counseling on campus would be more convenient, it is in your best interest to seek off-campus providers who can better support your mental health needs with specialized, extensive, or frequently available services.

Why do some students prefer off-campus care?

Students may prefer off-campus care for a variety of reasons. It can feel more private and there is a wider choice of providers with a wider range of schedules (weekend appointments are sometimes available). Additionally, some specialized services are not available at Counseling Services, which is why referrals from staff are very beneficial for some students.

What if I don't like the person you refer me to?

Finding the right clinician match is an important part of the referral process, and can be a major contributor to the effectiveness of treatment and care. The student has the right to decide if a clinician is not the right match for him or her. Counseling Services has access to many clinicians in the area, so do not hesitate to ask for additional referrals in order to find the right match for you.

If you have any additional questions or concerns, please contact the MCPHS Counseling Services office at on your campus or contact your clinician directly.

Tips for Finding an Off-Campus Counselor

When students are referred to the local community for psychotherapy, they often have questions about licensure, how to find a therapist, and making the first appointment. Below are a few guidelines to help you.

Degrees/Types of Providers/Who's Who – What you'll find:

- **Mental Health Counselors** and **Clinical Social Workers** have a master's or doctorate degree.
- **Psychologists** have a master's or doctorate in clinical or counseling psychology.
- **Psychiatrists** are medical doctors who are able to prescribe medications in addition to offering psychotherapy, and who are specialists in the use of medication to treat emotional distress.
- The particular degree a counselor has may not matter as much as the "fit" you have with him or her. **Licensure, however, is important.**

Contacting Counselors

Once you have received your off-campus referral and have determined your insurance coverage, the next step is to contact the counselor(s) you would like to see. Typically, this involves leaving a message for the counselor stating your name, number, and a brief description of why you are calling. The counselor will then call you back to discuss your options.

When the counselor calls, be prepared to give a few sentences describing why you are seeking counseling. For example, *"I have been feeling _____ and it is affecting me _____."* Be as specific as you can, especially if you have concerns about eating, substance use, unsafe behaviors, or an on-going condition. Ask the counselor if they have any openings to see a new client. If so, ask about their experience and approach in dealing with your type of concern. If the counselor does not have any openings, you might ask if your name can be added to a waiting list or if you can contact a different counselor.

Setting up an Appointment

If you feel comfortable with the answers you have received from the counselor, set up an appointment. If your insurance plan requires that you get a referral from your primary care physician, contact your doctor to explain that you are seeking counseling and need a referral for your insurance coverage.

Meeting the Counselor for the First Time

The counselor may ask you some standard questions about your concerns in the first meeting. If you have seen a counselor before you can sign a "release of information" which allows your previous counselor to communicate with your new counselor. Additionally, if you have found some approaches in counseling to be especially helpful or not helpful to you, that is good information to share with the new counselor. Let the counselor know what is likely to be most helpful to you. If after having some meetings with the counselor you feel it is not a good fit for you, it is fine to discuss these concerns. Counselors can sometimes alter their approaches, or you may decide that this counselor is not right for you and choose to see someone else.