

Student Mental Health Counseling Services - Policy & Procedures

1.0 Purpose

- 1.1 The purpose of this policy is to establish guidelines and procedures for providing accessible, confidential, and comprehensive mental health counseling services to all students enrolled at AUIB. This policy aims to promote mental well-being, prevent mental health issues, and support students in their personal and academic pursuits.

2.0 Scope

- 2.1 This policy applies to all students currently enrolled in the university, including full-time, part-time, undergraduate, and graduate students. The policy extends to all mental health counseling services provided directly or indirectly by the university.

3.0 Definitions

- 3.1 Mental Health Counseling Services - refers to therapeutic interventions, support, and guidance provided by licensed mental health professionals employed by the university or through contracted counseling services.
- 3.2 Confidentiality - the ethical obligation of mental health professionals to keep all information disclosed during counseling sessions private and not share it with others without the explicit consent of the student, except in cases where there is a legal or ethical obligation to disclose information.
- 3.3 Informed consent - the process by which students are provided with relevant information about the counseling services, including the purpose, risks, and benefits, and have the opportunity to ask questions before agreeing to participate in counseling.
- 3.4 Crisis intervention - immediate and focused mental health support provided to students experiencing acute emotional distress or mental health emergencies.

4.0 Policy

- 4.1 Counseling services should be readily accessible and at no cost to all students.
- 4.2 Counseling sessions should be conducted confidentially, adhering to ethical and legal guidelines, protecting the students' right to privacy and fostering an environment of trust.
- 4.3 Counseling services shall be provided in a non-discriminatory manner, respecting the diverse identities, cultures, and perspectives of the students seeking assistance.
- 4.4 The counseling approach shall aim to empower students, fostering their resilience, coping skills, and emotional well-being, while encouraging their personal growth and development.
- 4.5 Regular assessment and evaluation of counseling services shall be conducted to ensure the effectiveness and responsiveness to evolving student needs.

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- 4.7 AUIB shall provide counseling services through the Wellness Center or established partnerships with external mental health providers. These services may include individual counseling, group therapy, workshops, and psychoeducational programs.
- 4.8 All counseling sessions and related records shall be treated with strict confidentiality, adhering to legal requirements and professional ethical standards. Information about a student's participation in counseling shall not be disclosed to anyone, including university personnel or family members, without the student's explicit, written consent, except in cases of imminent danger or as required by law.
- 4.9 Students seeking counseling services shall be informed of the purpose, process, and limitations of counseling, as well as their rights and responsibilities thus providing informed consent.
- 4.10 The university should have a clear protocol for responding to mental health emergencies and crises, ensuring that students in distress receive immediate support and assistance.
- 4.11 In situations where the Wellness Center cannot meet a student's specific needs, appropriate referrals to external mental health professionals or agencies shall be provided.
- 4.12 The university should actively engage in mental health awareness campaigns, workshops, and events to promote mental well-being and reduce stigma surrounding mental health issues.
- 4.13 Students receiving counseling services have the right to respectful treatment, confidentiality, and the provision of relevant information. They also have the responsibility to provide accurate information, be actively involved in their treatment, and adhere to the counseling center's policies and guidelines.
- 4.14 The university shall establish mechanisms for students to provide feedback on counseling services and conduct regular evaluations to assess the effectiveness and quality of the counseling program.
- 4.15 Efforts shall be made to ensure continuity of care for students requiring ongoing support, including appropriate follow-ups and coordination with relevant stakeholders. Most brief counseling concerns can be addressed in 4-9 sessions. Students requiring ongoing support will be referred to community providers.

5.0 Procedures

- 5.1 Students can schedule counseling appointments by phone, email, or through an online appointment booking system. Walk-in appointments may be available for urgent situations.
- 5.1.1 Appointments are scheduled on a first-come, first-served basis, with priority given to urgent cases.

5.2 During the first session, a licensed mental health professional will conduct an initial assessment to understand the student's concerns, mental health history, and current situation.

5.2.1 The counselor will collaborate with the student to establish counseling goals and determine the most appropriate treatment plan.

5.3 Confidentiality is of utmost importance. Information shared during counseling sessions is strictly confidential, adhering to applicable laws and professional ethical standards.

5.3.1 Treating information confidentially means that AUIB cannot release any protected/privileged information to professors, advisers, parents, concerned friends, or other university personnel without the student's prior written informed consent.

5.3.2 Exceptions to confidentiality will be clearly explained to the student at the beginning of counseling (e.g., situations involving imminent harm to self or others).

5.4 Counseling interventions may include individual counseling, group therapy, workshops, and psychoeducational programs.

5.4.1 Sessions typically last 45-50 minutes, with the frequency determined based on the student's needs and the counselor's recommendations.

5.5 In cases where a student's needs extend beyond the scope of the Counseling Services, appropriate referrals will be provided to external mental health resources and specialists.

5.6 The Counseling Services maintains a crisis response policy and procedures to address immediate mental health emergencies. Refer to Mental Health Crisis Response Policy for additional information.

5.7 The Counseling Services conducts outreach programs and mental health awareness campaigns to promote emotional well-being across the campus community.

5.8 Counseling records are securely maintained, adhering to legal requirements and professional standards.

5.8.1 Counseling records are kept separate from academic records to ensure confidentiality.

5.8.2 The Counseling Services periodically collects feedback from students to assess the effectiveness of the counseling programs and identify areas for improvement.

5.9 Counseling staff engage in ongoing training and professional development to stay informed about best practices and new developments in mental health counseling.

Related Policies and Documents

Mental Health Crisis Response Policy
Policy Student Incident Response Policy
Privacy and Confidentiality Policy
Records Retention Management Policy