

Community College Task Force Survey of Community/2 Year College Counseling Services

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Purpose

The American College Counseling Association's (ACCA) Community College Task Force (CCTF) has conducted a second national survey to gather benchmark data about common practices for personal/mental health counseling in Community/2 Year colleges and to determine how many Community/2 Year colleges have trained counselors providing career counseling. It was distributed to a compiled list of Community Colleges around the United States and the following listservs: ACCA, NCHERM, & MAGNA. Professional counselors providing personal counseling in a Community College setting were invited to respond to the full survey. If there were no Counseling Services on campus, the appropriate Dean or Vice President was invited to respond (to Section I only).

Response Highlights

This survey represents 294 Community/2 Year Colleges from 44 different states.

- 68% of responding Community/2 Year Colleges provide mental health counseling.
- For those not providing services, the majority refer students to off-campus providers.
- 78% of respondents hold Master's Degrees.
- 37% hold licensure as an LMHC/LPC or equivalent and 35% hold no licensure.
- 37% earn between \$41K and \$61K, which was the most common response.
- 87% have no on-site Psychiatry resource.
 - The Gallagher Survey reports that 56% do have on-campus Psychiatry (Gallagher, 2010).
- 47% do not limit the number of Counseling sessions.
 - The Gallagher Survey reports that 44% do not have a session limit policy (Gallagher, 2010).



- 58% are not required to hold independent state licensure.
- 71% report having a Threat Assessment Team on campus.
- 85% use some form of online tools to reach students.
- 43% do not offer any suicide prevention programming or resources.
- 60% describe the intensity/severity of clinical issues, relative to past years, as "Higher Severity."
 - The Gallagher Survey reports that 91% of directors report that the recent trend toward greater number of students with severe psychological problems continues to be true on their campuses and 44% of their clients have severe psychological problems (Gallagher, 2010).

- Most common responses regarding utilization of Counseling Services:

Average number of sessions per academic year = 3 – 5

Average weekly caseload size = Over 75% of respondents report a caseload size of under 15 clients a week.

Percentage of student body seen for Counseling = 1% – 5%



- 84% provide mental health counseling & other services in the same office.
- Most services are available during normal business hours (8am-5pm).
- 51% say “We welcome a combination of crisis and general walk-ins” for counseling.
- 87% do not provide on-call or after-hours emergency coverage.
- 61% type or handwrite their counseling notes and statistical tracking.
- 78% of colleges have trained counselors providing career counseling.
- 79% have no dedicated Case Manager position on staff.
- 97% have regular duties/roles in addition to personal counseling. The top 4 are:
 - Committee work (78%)
 - Academic advising (70%)
 - Career counseling (68%)
 - Administration/management duties (49%)
- The top 4 student presenting problems are:
 - Academic problems
 - Stress
 - Anxiety disorders
 - Depression
- The last question of the survey asked respondents to share additional information. A brief summary of the response themes follows:
 - Financial stress and budget pressures negatively affect the availability and quality of services for students. Many Counseling Centers are under-resourced and under-staffed.
 - Many respondents draw a clear distinction between offering “Mental Health Counseling” and “Personal Counseling” on campus. The former being perceived as a medical model that emphasizes diagnosis and pathology, the latter being perceived as developmental, student-centered, and strengths based.
 - Referring students to off-campus services tends to be problematic due to college policies, student health insurance, and lack of community resources.
 - Counselors wear too many hats at some institutions and get mixed messages from administration about how to help students in distress.
 - Many colleges do not have Counseling Services per se, but still must find ways to assist students in acute distress or in need of mental health resources.
 - The availability, types, and structures of available Counseling Services on Community Colleges is a mixed bag across the United States.

Reference: Gallagher, R.P. (2010). National Survey of Counseling Center Directors. Alexandria, VA: International Association of Counseling Services.

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