

**AMERICAN UNIVERSITY
OF ARMENIA**

COUNSELING SERVICES

Procedures

Effective August 21, 2019

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VISION STATEMENT

Counseling Services aims to provide effective counseling to AUA students to foster their personal, emotional, social health and support their academic success. Counseling Services values the national, cultural, gender and individual diversity our students bring to AUA campus.

MISSION STATEMENT

Counseling Services contributes to the mission of the American University of Armenia, through the provision of individual and group counseling, workshops, crisis intervention and referral services. Counseling Services provides AUA students with resources to solve problems, overcome possible barriers and find effective solutions to issues impeding their academic, emotional, social, personal wellness and integrity.

SERVICES OFFERED

Individual and group counseling
Workshops
Crisis Intervention and referral services
Psychiatric services

ELIGIBILITY

All AUA students (degree or non-degree) are eligible to apply for individual and group counseling sessions and attend workshops, which are based on short-term, problem-oriented and solution-focused counseling model.

COUNSELING CENTER WORKING HOURS

Counseling Services are open from Monday through Friday from 09:00 a.m. till 05:45 p.m. during the academic year and will function within limited hours during holidays. Open hours for the individual/group counseling are 11:00 a.m. till 04:00 p.m., Students may get appointments outside of the open hours as needed. During the summer, services are provided only in emergency situations.

PAYMENT

No fees will be charged to students for utilizing Counseling Services on campus.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Confidentiality is of prime importance to Counseling Services, as we need to provide students with a safe and protected environment, an atmosphere of support and empathy where they can share their concerns. All personal information and the content of the sessions are not accessible to anyone, thus being strictly confidential. At the first counseling session, students above the age of 18 will be presented with the confidentiality procedures and will sign an informed consent form before the counseling commences, which signifies that the student is fully informed and ready to be engaged in the counseling process. The counselor will make all the necessary attempts to ensure that the student fully understands the confidentiality principles along with the exceptions. In the case of a student below the age of 18, the informed consent form must be signed by a parent or other guardian. In the case of a student under 18 years who approaches Counseling Services with a sensitive issue such as sexual orientation, pregnancy, drug use, relational issues with parents and does not want their parent(s) or guardian(s) to know about his/her engagement with Counseling Services, the student may be allowed to sign the consent form him/herself. This measure is taken to provide students with a safe, protective environment to talk.

Though the counseling process is highly confidential, there are a number of exceptional cases which oblige the counselor to report/release the information provided during the counseling without the student's permission to the counselor's supervisor:

1. If the counselor assumes that the student might be of danger to himself/herself or others, the counselor must release the information with or without the student's consent. This will allow facilitating better safety both for the student and those potentially involved.
2. If the counselor suspects child abuse (below 18 years old), including sexual abuse, physical abuse and neglect, the counselor may release the information without the student's consent. The counselor is also obliged to report/release the suspected abuse of elderly and vulnerable adults.

The student may review his/her records of the counseling sessions, upon written request, which will become part of his/her counseling records. Yet a student's counseling records and files are not educational records and are accessible only to the counselor and the student. They are not shared with staff members in other units within AUA.

Prior to the release of information to a third party, the student must complete an Information Release Form. Counseling information cannot be released to the following without the student's permission: parents or guardians, spouse, siblings, another therapist, GP or any other third party.

COUNSELING CENTER'S SCOPE OF SERVICES

INDIVIDUAL and GROUP COUSELING

Individual counseling provides students with the opportunity to present their concern(s) to the counselor during face-to-face sessions. The student may approach the counselor with concerns/problems the student had either prior coming to AUA or during matriculation at AUA. The range of issues may vary, including but not limited to emotional, personal, interpersonal, behavioral and academic problems, such as depression, anxiety, fear, loneliness, time

management, eating concerns, homesickness, low self-esteem, sexual identity, exposure to abuse, domestic violence, personal and family relationships, and others. Individual counseling will provide students with necessary resources to function better in the academic setting, perform better in social networking, and gain a better sense of life-impeding behaviors/situations.

Group counseling is offered to address issues such as assertiveness, overcoming shyness, advancing communication skills, personal development and other issues. The groups are normally closed and do not add members after the sessions start. The number of members per group may vary from 4 to 10.

Individual sessions are scheduled with the counselor with which the student feels most comfortable, and based on that counselor's availability.

The first session is the New Students Intake appointment, during which the intake form and Consent forms are reviewed. The Consent form must be signed during the first session (allowing more flexibility for urgent cases). A thorough assessment of the student's current concerns and history is discussed and based on the therapeutic needs, an appropriate schedule for sessions is determined.

Every day from 13:00 to 14:00, at least one counselor will be available for drop-in visits on a first come, first served basis. This service allows for the student to meet with a counselor both for urgent and non-urgent counseling.

If the student does not attend the first scheduled session, the counselor will follow-up with the student. All efforts to reach out to students are documented and maintained in the student's file. Counselors are responsible for making follow-up appointments.

WORKSHOPS

Counseling Services provides workshops, which are short-term, structured and agenda led. The workshops are open to 20 participants at a time. The workshops are designed in an interactive manner to facilitate active group discussion and provide time for exercises. During the workshops no one will be asked to share any personal information.

CRISIS INTERVENTION and REFERRAL SERVICES

Crisis intervention is a service offered to students who are in serious or immediate emotional distress, including cases where:

- the student verbally or behaviorally conveys that he/she is in crisis
- the student seems to have lost connection with reality
- the student upsets the university's ordinary operations and/or campus life
- the student is in imminent danger to herself/himself or others
- the student was exposed to attempted rape or rape
- the student was exposed to physical or emotional abuse
- the student identifies himself/herself as being in crisis
- Other extraordinary situations

Students in crisis can visit or call the Counseling Center during regular business hours (**09:00 a.m. till 05:45 p.m.**). During the non-working hours of Counseling Services, academic breaks or

holidays, students are advised to contact the Center for Student Success (CSS) by tel: (+374) 060-61-27-56 or visit CSS during regular working hours, or contact **AUA Security by tel: (+374) 060-612-727 or (+374) 060-612-729** or **Public Safety at 911** if there is any emergency.

A student who faces an emergency will meet the Counselor during regular working hours. The Counselor will meet the student and create a safety plan, including how to manage the crisis and make follow-up appointments with the student to further support him/her and build the necessary resilience skills.

SCREENING FOR SUICIDAL CASES /ADMISSION TO HOSPITAL

If a student has indicated a plan, attempted or has threatened to or has succeeded in inflicting bodily harm to him or herself or others, the Counselor will carry out a suicide evaluation with the student. If it is ascertained that the student is suicidal, the Counselor will discuss hospital admission with the student. If the student declines to go to the hospital, campus security will be called and asked to escort the student to the hospital. Efforts will be made to keep the student apprised of the process.

In keeping with professional ethics codes and legal requirements, maintaining the safety of students and others takes precedence over maintaining the confidentiality of students. In the event of a necessary disclosure of confidential information, only information vital to contributing to safety will be disclosed, and then only to persons in a position to make appropriate use of the information.

After the student is referred to the hospital and psychiatric hospitalization is recommended, the Counselor will notify the family so that they can provide support and help in making decisions about the student. The rationale for notifying or not notifying the provost (or designee) and families in these circumstances will be carefully documented in the student's file. The provost (or designee or the Counselor) will contact families of suicidal or dangerous students unless the Counselor involved has a previous relationship with the family.

Prior to returning to AUA, the student must obtain a psychological assessment and an on-going treatment plan (provided on recommendation of a doctor) that will allow them to be successful in their academic career. A letter from the Counselor will be sent to the student that outlines this plan. The letter will state that the Counseling Center and the provost (or designee) will review the recommendations and the provost (or designee) will in consultation with the Counselor and doctor make the decision if/when the student is able to return and if so, what assessments and on-going treatment may be required. A letter informing the student of the decision will be sent from the Provost's Office.

If the University becomes aware of the suicide attempt after the act, the Counselor, and if deemed appropriate, the provost (or designee), will interview the student to determine what action, if any, is necessary. The student may be asked to obtain a psychological assessment and on-going treatment plan in order to verify that the student is ready to return to classes.

PROTOCOL FOR SUICIDE THREAT

In the event a student is actively suicidal during a meeting with the counselor (i.e. has expressed hopelessness, a desire to die or kill him or herself, has access to means, has indicated a plan, etc.), the student will not be left alone; further action will be taken.

If the student has not inflicted bodily harm:

1. Call the provost (or designee) for support.
2. Discuss hospitalization with the student.
3. If the student will go voluntarily to a hospital, ask him/her to contact someone who can accompany them to the hospital for a psychiatric evaluation.
4. The student should be informed that his/her family must be notified.
5. During business hours, the counselor should call the emergency psychiatric team ahead of time. The counselor should identify him or herself as an AUA staff member, discuss the admission, and check on bed availability.
6. The counselor will contact the provost (or designee) who will contact the student's family to inform them about the student's situation.

If the student has inflicted bodily harm:

In cases which a reasonable person would regard as serious, where the person is believed to have ingested substance(s) the effect of which is uncertain, or where the extent of the injury is unknown and the student is unresponsive to stimuli, the student will not be left alone.

Immediately, AUA security must be contacted at **(+374) 060-612-727 or (+374) 060-612-729.** Security will first call the ambulance, and then contact the nurse **(+374) 060 61 2595)** within nurse's working hours (**9 a.m. till 05:45 p.m.**). The incident will be immediately reported to the Counselor **(+374) 060-612-519)** and the provost **(+374) 060-612-526)**. Upon arrival of the ambulance, the student will be taken immediately to the nearest hospital. The quickest, safest transportation available should be used following the guidelines below:

- 1) Call **103 or 911** for ambulance.
- 2) Private transportation (perhaps necessary in limited, emergency situations) should be used as a last resort.

*The students with suicidal ideation threat may be referred to the **Psychiatric Medical Center.**

MAKING APPOINTMENTS FOR COUNSELING

It is advised that the student contact the counselor in person (Main Building, room 418M), by e-mail (counselingservices@aua.am) or phone (**(+374-60) 60 612-519)**). Scheduled appointments are highly recommended to assure the counselor's availability. Yet, the student may also approach the counselor on a walk-in basis and the student will be seen on a first come, first served basis. At the first session, the student will be asked to bring in the completed Intake Form, which they can find either on the Counseling Services website (<http://studentsuccess.aua.am/files/2015/12/Intake-form.pdf>) or pick up from the Counseling Services Office (Main Building, 418M). The Intake Form will aid in determining the specific needs of the student, which will be discussed in more details during the session.

The number of sessions for individual counseling is up to 16 sessions, but the number may be extended based on need. The length of individual sessions is about 45 minutes (including session documentation time and preparation for the next one). Group Counseling usually runs from 4 to

6 sessions, 1.5 hours per session. Students may be referred for group counseling either by the counselor or be self-referred.

During the non-working hours of Counseling Services, academic breaks or holidays the students are advised to contact Center for Student Success (CSS) by tel: (+374) 060-61-27-56 or visit CSS during regular working hours, or contact **AUA Security by tel: (+374) 060-612-727 or (+374) 060-612-729** or **Public Safety at 911** if there is any emergency.

DEVIATIONS FROM THE APPOINTMENTS

Late Arrivals

The student will be seen if he/she is late for less than 15 minutes. If the student comes later, he/she will be asked to reschedule the appointment.

No Shows

“No show” is when a student misses the appointment without cancelling or rescheduling the appointment. The “No show” appointment will count against the limited number of sessions. If the student fails to show for two consecutive sessions, he/she will be notified of his/her ineligibility to utilize the service during the remainder of the academic semester.

Cancellation

The student may cancel the appointment via-email (**counselingservices@aua.am**) or by phone (**+374) 60-612-519**) 24 hours before the scheduled appointment. This is done to make the service available to other students. If the student makes regular cancelations, he/she may be informed of the service availability on the waiting basis.

DOCUMENTATION AND RETENTION OF STUDENT FILES

The student’s files will be maintained for a period of 7 years following the last contact with a counselor. At the end of the 7-year period, files will be destroyed. A record of destroyed files will be maintained by the AUA Counseling Center. This record shall include the counselor name, date of last contact, and date file was destroyed.

1. The student will be asked to fill in the Intake Form, which becomes part of the student’s counseling records.
2. All counseling services will be documented in student counseling files. “Hard” paper copies of such documentation will be placed in the student files as soon as such documentation is available.
3. All the files will be kept individually in a locked file cabinet in the Counseling Center, and will be accessible only to the counselor.
4. Every student will need to read and sign the consent form, which becomes part of the student counseling record files.
5. All the records of the sessions will become part of the student files, which are documented in the progress note file.
6. Each of the canceled, missed appointments or cases when the student came late, including the minutes missed must become part of the files, and if there is written

correspondences (and emails) between the counselor and the student, they should become part of the files.

7. Documentation of emergency or other services provided after regular working hours will be completed as soon as practically possible, using the "Progress Note" form.
8. Documentation of any student's permission to release confidential information will be made using the Counseling Center's release form. The original will be kept in the student's counseling file.
9. Copies of any correspondence (including e-mail messages) with or about students will be included in student counseling files.

REFERRAL SERVICES

As Counseling Service provides services on short-term basis to students and offers limited services, Counseling Services will utilize referral for all cases beyond the scope of the Counseling Service's activities. The student will be referred to the appropriate outside therapist or agency specializing in that issue. Some of the examples of the referral can be:

1. Students with suicidal ideations, threats
2. Students with psychiatric issues
3. Students who might be in need of long-term treatment
4. Students with drug/alcohol abuse
5. Students who might want to consult with a male counselor/psychologist
6. Any other cases that might be unprecedented and will require specialized care.

The counselor will provide all the necessary information to the student, including names and contact information of the individual counselor or agency.

The fee for the first counseling session of those students who might seek a male counselor will be covered by AUA. All the sessions after the first one, will be covered by the student or his/her family. All the other cases for the referral will be covered by the student or his/her family.

*Students with suicidal ideation may be referred to the Psychiatric Medical Center.

TERMINATION OF SERVICES

Utilizing Counseling Services, particularly individual and group counseling is completely voluntary. In some cases, the counselor may terminate the counseling as it might be more appropriate therapeutically. Other circumstances when the counselor may terminate the counseling may be due to the student's lack of commitment or the counseling is not beneficial to the student's situation. The termination of the services may occur when

1. The student has reached the goals set for the counseling
2. The student has left AUA
3. The student has taken temporary leave from study
4. The student has been referred to another counselor or agency
5. The student makes repetitive cancelations (two consecutive cancelations)
6. The student misses appointments (two consecutively missed appointments)

In the cases of the last two, the student will be notified of their ineligibility to utilize Counseling Services.

EDUCATION AND CAMPUS OUTREACH

Counseling Services provides support to faculty and staff who might have concerns about a student, including academic, behavioral, emotional or personal.

Counseling Services assists the community in developing and maintaining a healthy learning environment that encourages psychological growth and the holistic development of students.

This may include:

1. Assisting members of the university community to develop a greater understanding of mental health needs of the students and gain better understanding of the services offered.
2. Improving the quality of life on campus by raising the awareness about the importance of mental health in personal and professional development.
3. Providing consultation services to AUA faculty and staff with regards goal setting, decision making, conflict resolution, identification the best ways of supporting students in need of support.
4. Providing trainings on how to identify, approach and help students in need and provision of learning experiences through classroom presentations.