Tips on Making a Referral to Counseling

VA College Toolkit Handout

WHAT SHOULD I DO TO PREPARE TO TALK TO A STUDENT?

Learn as much as you can about the counseling center and support services for student Veterans.

- Learn about the staff - is there someone who specializes in Veteran issues?
- Learn about the services - do they offer support groups for student Veterans? Individual therapy? How many sessions?
- Learn about peer supports - is there a peer mentor program for student Veterans? Is there a student Veteran Organization on campus?
- Learn about outreach programs - are there outreach efforts for student Veterans?
- Keep a list of phone numbers available so you can give student Veterans specific contact information. By learning what is available at your counseling center, you can answer basic questions students may have and you can tell them about available programs.

Complete the following chart with helpful numbers on your campus:

Counseling Services	Main Number
• **Director name** • **Veteran specialist name** • **Other staff**	• Number of Director • Number of Veteran specialist • Other numbers
Disability Resource Center	Main Number
• **Office of Student Affairs** • **Dean of Students** • **Other staff working with student Veteran Issues**	• Main Number • Number of dean • Number of other staff
Campus Police	Main Number
Campus Crisis Team	Main Number
Community 24/7 Crisis Number	Main Number

HOW SHOULD I TALK TO STUDENT VETERANS? WHAT SHOULD I SAY?

- Talk with the student after class and in private.
- Express your interest in supporting the student Veteran
- Focus on observable behavior — avoid judging or criticizing.
- Use "I" messages — "I've noticed _____."
- Ask open ended questions but avoid "Why" questions. For example, you could say "What's going on for you right now?"
- Listen closely and demonstrate understanding BEFORE moving on to problem solving.
- Ask what you can do to help. "What do you need? How can I help?"

OFFER OPTIONS

- If academic performance is compromised, review class requirements and establish a plan for completing assignments.
- Provide options for treatment.
  - Explain what VA has to offer or at least where they can get that information.
  - Ask if he or she would be willing to hear about resources on campus.
- Introduce counseling services as one resource.
- Tell the student about the counseling staff - be as specific as you can, especially if there are people/services specifically for student Veterans.
- Depending on urgency and time, consider:
  - Calling the counseling center together.
  - Walking over to the counseling center together.
- If the student has a disability, ask if they are registered with the Disability Resource Center (DRC).
  - The DRC can work with the VA to help disabled student Veterans with accommodations.
- Some campuses have a special crisis team, and most communities have 24-hour crisis numbers.
  - Provide students with this information if needed.
  - Provide the Veterans Crisis Line. Veterans call **1-800-273-8255** and Press 1, **chat online** (www.veteranscrisisline.net/ChatTermsOfService.aspx), or send a **text message** to 838255 to receive confidential support 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year.