

Student Mental Health Program

Training and Technical Assistance for California Community Colleges



Memorandum of Understanding Guide

This document is intended to be used as a planning tool for colleges/districts interested in entering into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with their local Department of County Mental Health (CMH). Along with the MOU planning template, this document may serve as a guide for starting the MOU implementation process. Colleges/Districts should work with their legal departments before finalizing any formal agreement.



What is an MOU?

A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) is a document that expresses mutual accord on an issue between two or more parties. Memoranda of understanding are generally recognized as binding, even if no legal claim could be based on the rights and obligations laid down in them. A memorandum of understanding should (1) identify the contracting parties, (2) spell out the subject matter of the agreement and its objectives, (3) summarize the essential terms of the agreement, including whether the relationship will have financial or in-kind obligations, and (4) be signed by the contracting parties¹.

Why use an MOU for student mental health?

An MOU formalizes the cooperative relationship between a college/district and a county mental health department. This relationship may enable a college/district to better serve the mental health needs of their students by providing them with a referral source for students whose mental health needs exceed the capacity of the campus health system.

Sample Discussion Questions for Campuses and Counties

What are the goals of the collaboration between College/District and CMH?

- How will services under the MOU address the unmet mental health needs of college students?
- What are the expected outcomes as a result of forming this partnership?
- How long will the MOU be in effect? Will it be renewable?

What are the responsibilities of a College/District?

- What training, if any, will the college/district provide to CMH (e.g. about the needs of students)?
- What role will the college/district play in reporting and evaluation activities?
- How will the college/district maintain contact with CMH to ensure that they have all necessary information and updates on programs, policies, and services?

¹ Adapted from BusinessDictionary.com

- How will the college/district comply with required authorization to release confidential student information?
- What services will students referred to CMH receive? How are services paid for?
- Who will serve as administrative point of contact with CMH? What administrative supports will Campus provide to CMH?

What are the responsibilities of CMH?

- What training, if any, will CMH provide to campus? (e.g. on diagnostics and referrals)
- What role will CMH play in reporting and evaluation activities?
- Who will serve as an administrative point of contact with college/district?
- How will CMH maintain contact with college/district to ensure all necessary information and updates on programs, policies, and services are communicated?
- How will CMH coordinate with campus services (e.g. student health, disability services)?

Which students will be served under the terms of the MOU?

- Which students will be able to access CMH services?
- How will these students be identified?
- What is the referral process including emergency and after hours referrals (if campuses only have standard hours for services, or no services)?
- Will some student populations be targeted?

What are the policies and procedures for referring a student to County Mental Health?

- Who will make the referral to CMH?
- What documentation is needed for referral (e.g. must students referred to CMH be formally diagnosed prior to referral? If students must have a formal diagnosis, does the diagnosis need to be made by campus/district clinical staff? Must a diagnosis indicate that the student has a disability—i.e. that the student has a psychiatric condition severe enough to interfere with a major life activity?)?
- Do students need to be at least 18 years of age to be referred to CMH?
- Are referrals to CMH limited to full-time students?
- Is there a limit on how many students may be referred to CMH?

What is the follow-up process after a student has been referred to CMH?

- Who from college/district will notify CMH that a referral has been made?
- Who from CMH will notify college/district that a student has been seen?
- What information will be shared between college/district and CMH?
- Who will ensure that students have signed appropriate consent forms to share information between college/district and CMH?
- What documentation is expected to be maintained in the treatment record?
- Does CMH notify college/district when treatment has been terminated?
- If student has separated from the Campus for mental health reasons, what protocols will be in place to support their reentry?

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