

Mental & Physical Health

Vermont Technical College takes a holistic view of the student. Our goal is to enable students to be successful in their academic pursuits via personal and group coaching. Students may access the services Vermont Tech provides through the Center for Academic Success or the Health Center and the offices of the college may reach out to students through referral by faculty or staff such as residence life, student affairs, public safety, health services or athletics.

During regular office hours, we serve students taking credit-bearing classes, during the academic year, and matriculated in a degree program at any Vermont Technical College location. We have a brief counseling model and individual services are “short-term.” Follow-up care is determined by staff members in collaboration with the students.

This care may include individual sessions or referral to licensed mental health professional with up to 3 sessions covered by the college. On the Randolph campus, two independent therapists are contracted to spend time in the Center for Academic Success on the Randolph campus 2.5 days per week. The Williston campus has a long-term relationship with a practitioner based in Shelburne. At other sites, the Student Affairs department will work with site directors and students to identify resources in the community, develop relationships with these individuals and agencies, and make referrals. In the case where a student has an existing or preferred provider we work with those entities. A consulting psychologist meets with staff from Student Affairs and the Center for Academic Success on at least a monthly basis during the academic year to discuss and provide advice regarding students of concern.

Issues commonly addressed, include: personal issues such as anxiety, depression, loneliness, grief; relationship issues with partners, roommates, and family members; developmental issues around adjustment and transitions; and academic concerns. Issues commonly addressed through referral, include: multiple hospitalizations; chronic suicidality and self-injury; psychotic symptoms without medical stabilization; significant drug or alcohol problems needing treatment; long-standing or persistent eating disorders; and emergency care.

According to the 2017 report from the Center for College Mental Health at Penn State University, college counseling centers saw an increase in the number of students seeking treatment for “threat-to-self” for the seventh year in a row. Anxiety and depression are the most common concerns presented across the country. This is also true at Vermont Technical College, where 24% and 20% of respondents reported diagnosis or treatment during the past twelve months for anxiety and depression respectively (Vermont College Health Survey, 2016). Legally, mental health is increasingly considered in the context of disability and discrimination law and requires reasonable accommodations be made for students. Individualized assessments of health and safety risks, and “direct threat to self” is not automatically a reason for removal from educational pursuits.

For the next five years, the following goals are identified:

- Institute the JED campus initiative which is a four-year process “designed to guide schools through a collaborative process of comprehensive systems, program and policy development with customized support to build upon existing student mental health, substance abuse and suicide prevention efforts.” (Years 1-4)

- Work with IT to explore options for providing counseling to other sites via distance learning technology, provide recommendations, and implement solutions. (Years 1-3)
- Audit the process for medical withdrawal and readmission and make recommendations for change as needed. (Year 1)
- Consider the best option for serving veteran students in light of the retirement of our representative from the VA Vet Center in March 2018. (Year 1)
- Explore starting a substance abuse recovery program at VTC. (Year 2)
- Continue to conduct the American College Health Association Survey annually and utilize the data for planning purposes. (Years 1 & 3)
- Continue the current model of contracting with independent consultants, with consider expansion of regular office hours at the Williston campus. (Year 2)