

REFERRAL SKILLS

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Peer tutoring sessions can often bring with them a wide variety of issues. Tutees are often comfortable enough in a tutoring relationship to ask the tutor for advice about any number of these issues. Thus, a tutor must be knowledgeable about the types and locations of campus services available to students and how to access those services. Therefore, a workshop or sharing of information about referral skills is important.

Recognizing When To Refer Tutees To Services

- If a tutee is using tutoring time inappropriately, i.e., using tutoring time to socialize or to discuss personal issues, repeatedly coming to tutoring unprepared.
- If the tutee is very tense, shy, non-verbal, and hard to make eye contact with, uncommunicative.
- If the tutee's behavior changes dramatically from earlier tutoring sessions.
- If the tutee exhibits any of the following behaviors:
 - depression: general sadness, slow moving, weepy, hopeless or very agitated, nervous, worried, unable to focus on academics.
 - anxiety: agitated, unable to focus, “hyper,” consistently fearful, acting startled.
 - signs of substance abuse: failing to meet obligations, erratic behavior, inability to function effectively due to drug or alcohol intoxication.

Knowing How And Where To Refer Tutees To Services

- Tutors should discuss a problem situation with the tutor supervisor. Tutors need to understand that the tutee's problems are not the sole responsibility of the tutor.

The tutor supervisor might need to intervene to insure that the right services are initialed for the tutee.

- Offer information to the tutee about available support services. Tutors need to know what services are available. At a Referral Skills workshop, tutors should be presented with a listing of support services, locations, contact person(s), phone numbers, and hours of operation. Tutors can keep it on hand for easy access. Most likely several of these key contact persons will be at the workshop and will describe support programs and methods of access.
- Suggest a particular service to the tutee; as appropriate, explaining its location, services, hours, etc. The tutor could accompany the tutee if the tutee so desires. However, the tutee is the one who should make the initial phone call or contact.

Important Reminders

- Tutors ARE NOT trained psychologists, psychiatrists, social workers, health care personnel, or counselors. Tutors should not exceed the role as a peer tutor. Tutors should always go to the tutor program supervisor if there is an issue that needs attention.
- Tutors are not expected to solve all problems for their tutees. The primary focus as a tutor should be on course work, not on a tutee's personal problems. Do not allow the tutee to use the tutor in any other manner. Stop "Tutor Abuse" immediately.
- Tutors may not be successful with every assigned student. Tutors should be encouraged to recognize and acknowledge that no amount of tutoring will be enough for some students who bring their personal issues into the tutor sessions.

Tutoring alone may be inappropriate for such students. The peer tutor supervisor can help make that decision.