



University of Toronto TORONTO ONTARIO M5S 1A1

OFFICE OF THE VICE-PROVOST, STUDENTS

TO: University Affairs Board

SPONSOR: David Farrar, Vice-Provost, Students

CONTACT INFO: Phone (416) 978-3870 / Email <david.farrar@utoronto.ca>

DATE: April 21, 2004 for April 28, 2004

AGENDA ITEM: 4

ITEM IDENTIFICATION:

Annual Report from the Coordinator, Student Crisis Response Programs

JURISDICTIONAL INFORMATION:

The Student Crisis Response Program was established by the Vice-Provost, Students, as a pilot project four years ago in response to the growing need at the university for preventive strategies to assist students in crisis. The Program has a mandate to help staff develop additional skills and resources to respond to students in difficulty and difficult students. Student services are an area of responsibility under the University Affairs Board's terms of reference.

PREVIOUS ACTION TAKEN:

The Board received the last report of the Coordinator in March 2003.

HIGHLIGHTS:

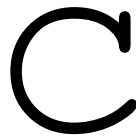
The Coordinator outlines her work for the past year on several projects, noting a substantial increase in caseload, and identifies her goals for the coming year.

FINANCIAL AND/OR PLANNING IMPLICATIONS:

The Student Crisis Response Program is funded by the Vice-Provost, Students.

RECOMMENDATION:

The report is presented for information only.



University of Toronto

Rae Johnson
Coordinator, Student Crisis Response Programs, Student Affairs
Office of the Vice-President & Provost

Toronto, Ontario
M5T 2Z9

Phone (416) 946-7111 / Fax (416) 971-2037
Email <rae.johnson@utoronto.ca>
Web <<http://www.sa.utoronto.ca>>

Student Crisis Response Programs

Annual Report

2003-2004

Prepared by
Rae Johnson

S

Introduction

The University of Toronto **Student Crisis Response Programs** are designed to enhance support and access to resources for students in difficulty or distress. Through a series of programs and initiatives, we focus on connecting students in need with the services that can assist them in resolving the difficult or critical situations they may encounter while engaged in their studies here. More broadly, we work to build capacities and develop networks across the university that facilitate connection, communication, and support for all students at the University of Toronto.

In January of 1999, a group of concerned students and staff from across the university met to consider options for responding to crisis situations. Out of the discussions of this group, and in consultation with other members of the University of Toronto community, the need for a coordinated response to students dealing with acute situational distress and personal crisis was identified, as was the need for a comprehensive and systematic on-site critical incident response.

The Programs are administered by a Program Coordinator, in conjunction with an Advisory Committee and a team of interns and work-study students.

Subsequent to that initial meeting, a Student Crisis Response Advisory Committee was formed, and in July 1999 the Committee approached the Vice-Provost, Students for project development funding. A two-year pilot project was approved, with funding provided entirely through the Office of the Vice-Provost, Students. A .60 staff-appointed Coordinator was hired in March 2000, and the position increased to .80 in July 2002. The programs were reviewed and positively evaluated at the end of the pilot period in March 2002, and continued program funding was secured through the Office of the Vice-Provost, Students. The Programs operate under the general direction of the Director, Student Affairs.

Current Programs

Education

Training and education on issues related to students in crisis is an important focus of the Student Crisis Response Programs, as it raises awareness in the University of Toronto community about these issues, as well as informing staff, students, and faculty about the existence of the services provided by the programs.

The Student Crisis Response Programs are organizing a province-wide conference on responding to suicidal and violent behaviour on campus
April 29th, 2004

These educational programs work to build capacity and develop networks to assist students in difficulty, and provide ongoing opportunities to share ideas, information, and support for individuals across the University who work with students in crisis. Programming is designed to reflect the real-life needs and issues of the university community in dealing with students in crisis.

Some of the educational programming offered in the 2003-2004 academic year is outlined below:

Self-Care As Crisis Prevention

- Student Leadership Development Office at the Faculty of Physical Education and Health
- The New U Student Leadership Development Conference
- Residence Staff Training
- Faculty of Social Work Graduation Committee
- UTM Registrar's Staff
- ESE Staff Development Program
- TATP Training Program

Referrals and Resources for Students in Difficulty

- Residence Staff Training
- UTM Registrar's Staff
- ESE Staff Development Program
- University of Toronto Police

Suicide Awareness: Basic Assessment and Intervention Skills Workshop

- UTM Residence Staff
- ESE Staff Development Program
- Residence Staff Training
- University of Toronto Police Communications Staff

How to Break Bad News

- ESE Staff Development Program

Dealing with Disruptive Behaviour

- UTM Registrar's Office

Understanding Psychosis

- NESSIE programs

Students At Risk: Responding to Suicidal and Violent Behaviour on Campus

- Province-wide conference

In addition to educational seminars and presentations, the Student Crisis Response Programs also produces a 16-page guide, entitled ***Connections: Identifying and Referring Students in Difficulty***. This booklet is intended to assist staff and faculty in identifying when professional assistance might be beneficial to a student, how to make an effective and appropriate referral, and provides information on consultation and emergency resources available to the University of Toronto community. Requests for this booklet have come from all over University of Toronto, as well as from other universities in Canada and the United States. The booklet is available online, and the second edition is now in print.

Critical Incident Response

In response to the identified need for a systematic on-site response to critical incidents affecting University of Toronto students, the Student Crisis Response Programs and the Community Safety Office have worked together to develop an organized response existing within a network of connected teams.

The Critical Incident Response Team (CIRT) works in tandem with the Crisis Management (Red Book) Team and the Employee Assistance Plan (EAP) Trauma Response Team as part of the overall Critical Incident response at the University of Toronto. It is designed to supplement existing local resources in the event of a serious event or crisis – for example, the unexpected death of a student. Composed of a volunteer roster of about 25 staff members across all three campuses, it responds to critical incidents involving the University community, and provides immediate on-site support and trauma management to students affected by the incident. For example, this past year members of the CIRT team were called to provide support and information to students in a professional faculty after the death of a community member. In addition to the services provided by the CIRT Team, the CIRT Coordinators also provide practical and organizational support to staff and students dealing with critical incidents that occur on campus. This year, the SCRCP Coordinator and the Community Safety Coordinator were called onsite to respond to the on-campus death of a teaching assistant, a sexual assault in residence, and a seriously ill student in residence.

The CIRT Coordinators provide practical support in dealing with critical incidents on all three campuses.

The SCRCP Coordinator also served as Secretary for the Task Force on Emergency Preparedness and Crisis Response in 2003. Out of that initiative, the SCRCP Coordinator has been working in conjunction with the designated Crisis Manager and related offices to help develop comprehensive plans for responding to a range of emergency and crisis situations that may occur on campus.

Case Consultation

The Student Crisis Response Programs Coordinator provides case consultation to staff and faculty with questions or concerns about students in difficulty. Together with staff in Academic Departments, Residences, Registrars, Student Services, and other divisions, the Coordinator works to develop strategies and options that will both support the student and resolve the crisis. Depending on the particular requirements of the situation, the Coordinator may intervene directly to assist a student, and can provide follow-up and debriefing as needed.

The program caseload has increased by 400% over last year.

The Coordinator responds to a range of student crisis situations, and works with local staff to provide the degree and type of intervention that will assist students in serious behavioural crisis to maintain satisfactory academic progress and function successfully within the campus community. Typically, the Coordinator deals with three main types of crisis – individuals in personal crisis, individuals with behavioural issues that precipitate a local crisis, and groups of students affected by a crisis situation.

Depending on the individual situation, the Coordinator:

- Provides assistance to students in various stages of difficulty or crisis through case consultation and strategy development.
- Facilitates connection to and coordination of campus and community resources.
- Assists faculty and staff to address instances of student behaviour considered inappropriate for the university environment.
- Provides assistance in the development of local policies and protocols designed to respond effectively and appropriately to students in difficulty.

Mental Health Information Network

Comprised of representatives from Accessibility Services, Counselling and Learning Skills Services, Psychiatric Service, Health Service, Woodsworth College, the Transitional Year Program, the Community Safety Office and the Student Crisis Response Programs, the Mental Health Information Network meets regularly to discuss issues of shared concern as they relate to issues of student mental health. In particular, the network works to develop greater connectivity between University of Toronto services that provide support to students with mental health issues, and between campus providers and their counterparts in the larger community. For example, the Network provides a forum where members can:

- Ensure that all related campus services were aware of new initiatives and developments occurring in each service or program area
- Work collectively to develop enhanced relationships with key community service providers, such as the Gerstein Centre, the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, St. Michael's Hospital, and Women's College Hospital
- Review protocols for responding to student mental health situations, such as a student manifesting psychotic behaviour in a student residence, in consultation with university stakeholders and community services
- Identify gaps in the provision of information for students with mental health conditions, and work collectively to develop strategies for addressing them
- Identify the professional development and community education needs of the university community with respect to mental health issues, and cultivate innovative ways of delivering mental health information and training to target audiences

Members of the Network have met several times during the Winter 2004 term, and have begun to identify a number of initiatives they wish to pursue over the next academic year. These initiatives include exploring the expansion of case management resources in responding to students with mental health issues, and refining the informational materials currently in use at the university with respect to these issues.

Student-in-Difficulty Project

The Student In Difficulty Committee model is based on the idea that collaboration and communication serve the needs of both staff and students in dealing with demanding student crisis situations, and that the development of local crisis response capability is essential to ensuring best practices in a large, decentralized university environment.

In June 2003, the Students-In-Difficulty Committee model was presented at the Annual CACUSS Conference.

The Student in Difficulty Committee model was tested as a one-year pilot project at University College, and evaluation research conducted by the Centre for Applied Social Research at the Faculty of Social Work has shown it was helpful in enhancing the ability of that community to respond to a variety of crisis situations. A manual has been developed, and is available to divisions interested in forming a local committee. The full report of the project is available online on the Student Crisis Response Programs website (www.sa.utoronto.ca/crisis).

Campus and Community Involvement

The Coordinator meets regularly with key personnel in different departments on all three campuses of the University, and attends meetings of related committees and working groups. These developing liaisons allow the Coordinator to become more informed about current issues and efforts, and to coordinate the Student Crisis Response Programs efforts with those initiatives. Ongoing liaisons with numerous individuals and offices also help to enhance the effectiveness and visibility of the Student Crisis Response Programs. The Coordinator is involved with the following committees:

- Student Affairs Advisory Committee (2003)
- Women's Safety Network (Chair, 2003)
- Interim Room Steering Committee (designated Case Manager)
- Status of Women Advisory Council
- Scarborough Campus Committee on Safety and Security
- Task Force on Emergency Preparedness and Crisis Response (Secretary)
- Ministry of Health's Policy Working Group on Early Intervention in Psychosis

Program Priorities for 2004-2005

- Ongoing training and development of the Critical Incident Response Team, and the refinement of its role within the overall critical incident response at the University.
- Continued capacity and network building through educational programming, with a particular focus on outreach to faculty.

-
- Continued development of crisis-related educational materials for University of Toronto faculty and staff, including planned revisions for the third edition of Connections.
 - Expansion of connections with community crisis response agencies and services, such as the Gerstein Centre and the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, through the work of the Mental Health Information Network.

Summary

Serving the diverse needs of students in crisis requires not only adequate resources and effective programming; it also requires increased sensitivity and capacity among the many individuals at the University who regularly encounter students in difficulty or distress. The Student Crisis Response Programs endeavour to address both of these needs – by offering student-centred programs and centralized resources to fill in some of the identified gaps in service (such as specialized case consultation and case management, and on-site critical incident response), as well as by providing opportunities for local communities to develop their own knowledge and expertise in assisting students in crisis.