

Parental Notification for Dependent Students Receiving Mental Health Treatment

Responsible Offices:
University Counseling
Services & University
Student Health Services

POLICY STATEMENT AND PURPOSE

In accordance with the Code of Virginia, Section 23-9.2:3.C., Virginia Commonwealth University has developed a policy and implementing procedures for notification of parents of dependent students who receive mental health treatment at the University's student health or counseling centers and when there is a substantial likelihood that, as a result of mental illness, the student will in the near future (1) cause serious physical harm to himself/herself or others as evidenced by recent behavior or any other relevant information or (2) suffer serious harm due to his/her lack of capacity to protect himself/herself from harm or to provide for his/her basic human needs.

Notification to parents may be withheld if the student's treating physician or treating clinical psychologist has made a part of the student's record a written statement that, in the exercise of his/her professional judgment, the notification would be reasonably likely to cause substantial harm to the student or another person.

The procedures pertain to all University Counseling Services (UCS) and all University Student Health Services (USHS) staff involved in clinical consultation and/or direct service delivery to Virginia Commonwealth University students.

WHO SHOULD READ THIS POLICY

All VCU faculty, staff, parents, and students should read this policy.

RELATED DOCUMENTS

Code of Virginia, Section 23-9.2:3.C

CONTACTS

University Counseling Services and University Student Health Services officially interpret this policy and shall revise or eliminate any or all parts as necessary to meet the changing needs of Virginia Commonwealth University and its students. Please direct policy questions to University Counseling Services or University Student Health Services.

DEFINITIONS

Substantial likelihood that the student will, in the near future, cause serious harm to himself/herself or others:

Includes, but is not limited to:

- suicidal ideation with intent to harm self
- lethal suicide attempt
- general oral or written threats to people or property, including the use of any electronic means, with apparent intent and means to execute threat
- any physical assault, with or without weapons
- specific threats to inflict harm (e.g., a threat to shoot or otherwise harm a named individual)
- acute alcohol or drug intoxication or poisoning
- restrictive eating causing significant medical concern

Suffer serious harm due to lack of capacity to protect self from harm or provide for basic human needs:

The student evidences substantial impairment of judgment, cognition or behavioral control that interferes in ability to protect or care for self and can lead to serious harm. This is associated, most commonly, with a recent change in functioning and an associated decline in relevant capacities for self-protection (adapted from Cohen, Bonnie & Monahan, 2008).

Parents:

"Parent" means a parent of a student and includes a natural and/or adoptive parent.

Dependent Student:

Any person enrolled full-time or part-time in any program of Virginia Commonwealth University and its various schools who is a dependent for income tax purposes.

PROCEDURES

In accordance with language of the Code of Virginia University Counseling Services (UCS) and all University Student Health Services (USHS) staff will adhere to the following procedures:

1. Information related to parental notification in accordance with the Code of Virginia Section 23-9.2:3.C will be included in the consent to treatment form and shared with students during any initial contact.
2. UCS and USHS staff will notify their respective Director (e.g., Director of University Counseling Services, Director of University Student Health Services), or the Director's designee, of any student who meets the Code of Virginia criteria for parental notification. The Director, or Director's designee, will work with the staff on executing parental notification. Information shared with parents will include: 1) a description of student's behaviors that meet criteria for parental notification and 2) recommendations/actions that UCS or USHS is taking to address risks posed by the student's behaviors.
3. Although a release is not required, UCS and USHS, nevertheless, will seek to obtain one from the student when possible in order to aid in preserving the therapeutic relationship.
4. UCS and USHS staff will make notations in the student's mental health record or medical chart reflecting 1) specific behaviors which meet criteria for parental notification, 2) the specific process of parental notification that has been selected, 3) the rationale for the selection of said process, and 4) the date and time that such responsibility for notification has been discharged and to whom.
5. When a student meets criteria for parental notification there is one exception that would suspend the parental notification requirement: As per language contained in the Code ... *"notification may be withheld if the student's treating physician or treating clinical psychologist has made a part of the student's record a written statement that, in the exercise of his professional judgment, the notification would be reasonably likely to cause substantial harm to the student or another person."* Accordingly, UCS and USHS staff will consult with their Director, or the Director's designee, to determine that parental notification is contraindicated. If confirmed, then such determination shall be noted in the student's record with clear indication of the anticipated harm that would be caused as a result of parental notification.