

Virginia Tech Carilion School of Medicine (VTCSOM)

Statement: Wellness
Subject: Student Affairs
Administrator: E. Holt
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Counseling Services

As part of our commitment to helping students achieve their full potential, VTCSOM provides counseling and wellness services to all students (<http://www.jchs.edu/page.php/prmID/259>). Counseling (therapy) is a free and confidential service, supported by the Student Health Fee, which seeks to assist in the development and maintenance of students' academic and personal growth.

Students are encouraged to utilize counseling services if an individual needs help in making necessary adjustments for improving confidence and self-efficacy, managing depression and anxiety, learning better communication skills, strengthening relationships and solving problems that interfere with learning and life. Medical school can challenge an individual's resilience and wellness. Engaging in counseling can help develop skills for navigating these challenges.

Students are able to receive services by self-referral or they may be referred by the Associate Dean for Student Affairs or the Director of Academic Counseling and Enrichment Services. Refer to the Student Health and Welfare Policy for details about mandatory referrals.

The Director of Counseling and Wellness is Dr. Jennifer Slusher (jjslusher@jchs.edu). Her office is on the 4th floor of the Carilion Roanoke Community Hospital and her phone number is (540) 985-8502.

Appointments

Initial, non-emergency appointments are usually scheduled within one week of the request. Appointments can be made by calling (540) 985-8395 or e-mailing Debbie Stinnett at dmstinnett@jchs.edu. In the event of an after-hours emergency, students are to call RESPOND at (540) 776-1100 or CONNECT at (540) 981-8181. Other resources include the student's primary health care provider or the hospital emergency department. The cost for any such care is the responsibility of the student.

Confidentiality

Contact made with counselors, including information resulting from individual sessions, does not become a part of a student's permanent record. Such information can be released only with the written permission of the student. The exceptions to confidentiality, as mandated by state law, include:

- when the information relates to clear and imminent danger to an individual;
- when there is reason to believe that a child or vulnerable adult has been, or is likely to be, abused or neglected;
- when the information is requested by a valid court order;
- when the information is academic; and

- when it is necessary to protect the health and safety of the student, his/her family, the VTC community, or the public.

Any disclosure in these situations will be made to an appropriate authority and will be limited to material directly related to the issue involved.

Eligibility for Services

All Virginia Tech Carilion School of Medicine students are eligible for Counseling Services.

Limits of Service and Referral to Other Providers

These counseling services are primarily for short-term therapy. If more intensive care or certain specialty or hospital services are needed, the staff can assist in making referrals to outside mental health providers. Health professionals who provide psychiatric, psychological counseling or other sensitive health services to medical students may not be involved in the academic evaluation or promotion of students receiving these services. As with counselors with the Center for Counseling and Wellness, contact made with psychiatrists, psychologists, or other counselors, including information resulting from individual sessions, does not become a part of a student's permanent record. Such information can be released only with the written permission of the student. The exceptions to confidentiality, as mandated by state law, include:

- when the information relates to clear and imminent danger to an individual;
- when there is reason to believe that a child or vulnerable adult has been, or is likely to be, abused or neglected;
- when the information is requested by a valid court order;
- when the information is academic; and
- when it is necessary to protect the health and safety of the student, his/her family, the VTC community, or the public.

Other counseling services:

In addition to the counselors with the JCHS Counseling and Wellness Center, there are counselors, psychologists, and psychiatrists from who students can seek assistance. Refer to the Student Services page on Blackboard for an updated listing.

Student Wellness

VTCSOM is committed to providing its students with opportunities to learn about wellness and explore ways to promote their own physical, mental, emotional, social, and spiritual wellbeing. We view wellness not merely as the absence of illness but as a commitment to the optimal development of the whole person. There is a curriculum entitled; "From Student to Clinician" that includes class retreats during each of the four years. The year one retreat focuses on acclimating to medical school and school life balance. The second year retreats focus on preparing for the change from a curriculum centered in the classroom and small group setting to a curriculum centered in the clinical settings. The third year retreats focus on balance, wellness during clinical training, and dealing with loss and grief. The Transition to Residency courses in the spring of Year 04 include sessions on preparing for life as a resident.

There is a student gym located on the second floor of VTC. The student gym includes cardio equipment as well as a resistance band training station. Additionally, students each receive a membership to the Roanoke and Botetourt Athletic Clubs and Zoom fitness center.

Students also have access to a wellness room across from the student gym, specifically designed to provide comfort and privacy for nursing mothers as well as for medication self-administration and private worship. Each Friday, students receive an email newsletter titled, Wellness Weekly that includes various tips and ideas for healthy living during medical school. The Wellness Advocacy Committee distributes the newsletter as well as offers optional wellness activities approximately once a month. VTC is situated within one block of three city-owned parks. Immediately across the street, the Riverside Sports Complex, provides baseball and softball diamonds, a soccer field, and open green areas for a variety of games. The Wasena and Smith Parks include a bicycle path, jogging trail, and greenway along the river.

Ombudsperson:

The Ombudsperson at VTCSOM serves as a neutral, independent and confidential resource for students within the medical school community. Independent of existing administrative or academic organizational structures, and responsible only to the Dean of the School of Medicine, the Ombudsperson supplements other resources available to students. Services include mediation, investigation, listening, coaching, and offering problem-solving options. A student may wish to connect with the ombudsperson to seek assistance regarding perceived unprofessional behavior, interpersonal and professional difficulties, or other concerns. The Ombudsperson has no authority to take action but has access to anyone in the School for the purpose of informal resolution of concerns and disputes.

The Ombudsperson will treat all matters confidentially within the bounds of the law. The student's privacy will be respected. Should the pursuit of an inquiry require the disclosure of details that identify a student, that student would be contacted and no further action would be taken without the student's permission (unless there is a potential threat to safety or a legal issue compelling disclosure).

To access the Ombudsperson, please contact the Office of the Dean at 540-526-2559 and request a confidential appointment.

Disability Resources

VTCSOM seeks to consistently provide educational opportunities to a broad spectrum of people, many of whom traditionally may not have considered medical school an option. VTCSOM serves all applicants and students equally and does not discriminate against anyone based on disability. VTCSOM actively works to monitor its compliance with Titles VI and VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, Sections 503 and 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, the Age Discrimination Employment Act, the Vietnam Era Veterans' Readjustment Assistance Act of 1974 and all other laws, rules and regulations that are applicable. VTCSOM continually works to educate faculty and staff about discrimination issues. VTCSOM will continue these and other measures to ensure equitable access and treatment for all applicants, students and employees. Refer to the Disability Assessment and Accommodation Policy for further details.

Disability Insurance:

Disability insurance is included as part of tuition and fees.