Testimony

SB 750: An Act Concerning the Prevention and Treatment of Mental Illness At Institutions of Higher Education

Higher Education and Employment Committee - Connecticut General Assembly

February 13, 2019

The University of Hartford’s department of Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) has a long history of providing a large number of programs for the prevention and treatment of mental illness for undergraduate and graduate students. CAPS is staffed by three licensed clinical psychologists and one licensed national certified counselor, and houses a rigorous training program whereby doctoral students in clinical psychology treat UHart students while receiving direct supervision from staff.

CAPS treatment services are entirely covered by tuition fees for full-time undergraduates, while part-time undergraduates and graduate students pay a nominal fee for services. CAPS provides weekly and biweekly individual psychotherapy sessions for students, and offers a number of group therapy modalities such as mindfulness meditation, coping with grief and loss, healthy body image group, adjusting to college, and developing social connections – to name a few. For those students who could benefit from learning better coping skills to manage anxiety, depression, and loneliness, CAPS offers a series of four consecutive weekly Wellness Workshops. In essence, these workshops focus on helping students develop and maintain good mental health hygiene. In addition, CAPS assists students struggling with alcohol or other drug use in the form of recovery support groups, psychoeducation, and on-campus efforts to provide safe and enjoyable alternatives to drinking and drugging.

Importantly, CAPS provides emergency services for at-risk students during office hours (8:30am to 4:30pm M-F), and 24/7 “after hours” on-call crisis consultation for students in high distress. For students who require longer-term or more intensive treatment, we facilitate referrals to community providers for higher level-of-care treatment. Finally, CAPS staff and trainees engage in extensive outreach to the UHart community - dialoguing with classrooms, providing in-service presentations to various departments, training residence life and public safety on helping students in distress, and tabling at resource fairs and orientation to make parents and students aware of treatment resources on and off campus. Outreach efforts focus largely on reducing stigma of seeking help for emotional and psychological concerns, helping others to recognize signs and symptoms of mental illness in students, preventing suicide and self-harm, and building resiliency and adaptive coping in part to prevent worsening of student mental health.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Jeffrey M. Burda, Psy.D.,
Director of Counseling and Psychological Services