Identifying and Responding to Students in Difficulty

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RISK ASSESSMENT

Questions:

Is there an at risk situation here?
Is the student at risk?
Is the client group/individual at risk?
Is the Practice Teacher at risk?
Is the Agency at risk?

Background issues and trends:

Changes in the student body: Age/Gender/Ethnicity etc.

Is there now a growing ʻsense of entitlement?

Agency environment: context and challenges.

Common sources of student distress: Travel/Finances/Academic ability/
Expectations

General Sampling of Presenting Issues to NUIG Student Counselling Services

Ref: Past Annual Reports

- Depression/Mood change disorder

- Anxiety

- Relationships

COMMON SOURCES OF STUDENT DISTRESS:

Academic performance issues

Expectation of higher academic marks

Difficulty dealing with transition from academic to placement

Coping with sadness, depression or mood changes

Addictions

Low self esteem and confidence

Developing peer and intimate relationships

Family issues

Sexual or physical abuse

Crisis pregnancy

General and social anxieties

Body-image concerns

Financial or welfare concerns

Cultural concerns

Loss and grief

ALARM SIGNS

•Unusual Behaviour

*Feeling overwhelmed

•

Repeat Requests for assistance by student

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Student getting upset very easily

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Support not leading to change

What does a nervous or anxious student look like?

Spot the differences

*Shy, nervous, embarrassed, self-conscious

•Headaches, sick, faint, dizzy, shaking, hot, hyperventilating

•Problems articulating thoughts, stuttering

*Lacking confidence

*Extensive worrying prior to event

*Bad eye contact

*Closed body position

BACKGROUND ISSUES AND TRENDS:

Tiredness

Personality Clash

Student has difficulty taking direction

Student doesn't listen

Student is confused about their learning needs

Gender difficulties

These factors can make the transition to placement even more difficult

Identifying Difficulties

Considerations:

Is the student's behaviour causing concern? To Whom?

How does the student seem to you?

Is there other information to cause concern?

Is this behaviour different from previous students you might have had?
Is this behaviour different from your expectation of this student?
Is this behaviour different from the earlier days of placement?

Would it be helpful to talk with the Tutor?

Do you need more information from the student?

Do you need more information from others?

KEY RULES:

*Evidence

•Evidence

•Evidence

•Adopt an investigative approach

•Record all meetings/All supervision sessions

•Become 'task orientated'
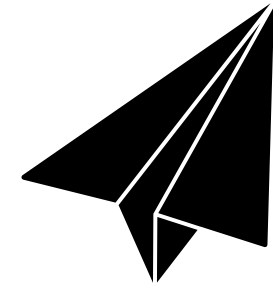
•Measure performance

•Inform the Tutor and subsequently the PLC if situation is not resolved

*Talk things out with your own Supervisor

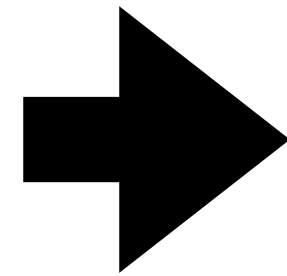**Have a time schedule - In two weeks we will see….. In three weeks……

RESPONDING EFFECTIVELY
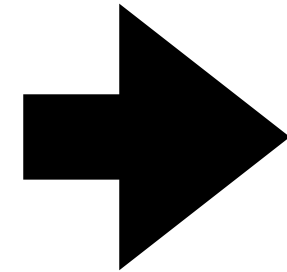
IS THE PROBLEM URGENT?

WILL THE STUDENT ACCEPT HELP?

YES

LENGTHEN SUPERVISION SESSIONS
REQUEST AN EARLIER OR ADDITIONAL TRI-PARTITE MEETING

TASK ORIENTATE & TIME STRUCTURE

NO

SEEK FURTHER HELP

RECORD ALL INTERACTIONS

END PLACEMENT

PRACTICE TEACHERS

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What are the issues for you as the Practice Teacher?

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Identifying difficulties: Naming the issues.

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Using Supervision appropriately

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Calling in the Tutor

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Requesting a Placement co-ordinator visit

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Informing the Director/Professor of the course

- Seeking support from your own Supervisor

- One shower doesn't make a Winter

References

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McGovern, M. (2017).Touch, click and be informed: Making a series of multi-touch ebooks to support social work placement. *The Journal of Practice Teaching and Learning. Vol. 15* (1), pp.94-108.

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