

RECOGNIZING AND CONFRONTING SUBSTANCE ABUSE A GUIDE FOR FACULTY

The Student with Drug or Alcohol Problems:

The stressors of college combined with the multiple challenges students face in other areas of their lives place our students at a high risk for substance use. A variety of substances are available that provide escape from pressing demands. However, drugs may soon create problems in the form of addiction, accident proneness, difficulty maintaining interpersonal relationships, health problems, and declining academic performance (due to, for example, sporadic attendance, concentration difficulties, etc.). The most abused substance -- so commonplace that we often forget that it is a drug -- is alcohol. Alcohol and other drug-related accidents remain the greatest single cause of preventable death among college students.

Students who are abusing or misusing alcohol or other drugs are often hesitant to seek help or do not recognize the existence of a problem. However, these students need specialized, accessible services. If you are concerned that a student may have a drug or alcohol problem, it is important to encourage the student to seek help because of the potential negative effects on overall functioning and emotional well-being. At Howard Community College, we care about the academic success of our students; thus we enforce standards to which our students must adhere. Please refer to the Student Code of Conduct (can be found in the Student Handbook) regarding the substance use policy on the grounds of HCC for more information.

Faculty Have Reported Being Worried About Students Who Frequently Display The Following Signs:

- Poor class attendance
- Sudden change in attitude (e.g. neglecting academic studies)
- Inattentive in class (e.g. avoids class discussions and tardiness)
- Erratic behavior (e.g. mood swings)
- Flat affect (lack of emotional expression)
- Falling asleep in class
- Missing deadlines for assignments
- Making excuses
- Poor grooming
- Writing assignments that focus on substance use and seem to be autobiographical

****IT IS IMPORTANT TO NOTE THAT ONE SIGN DOESN'T MEAN THAT A PROBLEM EXISTS. HOWEVER, THE ACCUMULATION OF TWO OR MORE SIGNS INCREASES THE LIKELIHOOD THAT A PROBLEM EXISTS****

How to Help:

If you know a student who exhibits any of the signs listed above, you can help by doing the following:

- Be on the alert for signs of drug abuse
- Speak with the student privately
- Speak with the student when she/he is sober
- Exhibit genuine concern and avoid judging
- Describe to student specific behavioral change(s) you have observed (e.g., "Your performance is dropping in class," "You do not participate as much," "You turn in assignments late").
- Speak with the student about potential and actual consequences of behavior(s)
- Speak with the student in group format, if one or more persons express concern
- Provide student with information regarding free personal counseling on campus (Counseling and Career Services, Room L-140, 772-4840)
- Refer student (or stop by yourself) to Counseling and Career Services Resource Library to read more substance abuse and addiction issues
- Inform students (preferably at the beginning of the semester) about the standards expected of them at HCC regarding substance use (give them a copy of the Student Code of Conduct)
- Get help from Campus Police in instances of out-of-control and/or intoxicated behavior.

Adapted from "Making the Link-Faculty and Prevention" The Higher Education Center for Alcohol and Other Drug Prevention

What to Avoid:

- Ignoring the problem
- Chastising or lecturing
- Enabling the behavior by giving undeserved "breaks"
- Accusing the student of drug/alcohol problem
- Confronting the student in front of others (unless others are involved or concerned)

When to Contact Emergency Services (Security or 911):

If a person who has been using shows any one of these signs....

- Difficult to arouse
- Shallow breathing
- Uncontrollable vomiting
- Cold, clammy skin
- Fever or chills

- Skin that is blue under finger nails
- An intent on driving while using
- Combativeness and belligerence

Call Counseling and Career Services (772-4840) and ask to speak with a personal counselor if you would like more information regarding substance abuse