

## **PCC 2017-18 Service: Graduate and Professional Student FAQs**

18 September 2017

### **Does the Psychological & Counseling Center (PCC) limit individual therapy session limits to 6 sessions?**

The PCC does not have session limits. Rather, the average number of sessions a student receives is six sessions. When a student is approaching six sessions, PCC providers will write a brief clinical summary containing goals, progress, acuity, and circumstantial factors to the PCC clinical review team. This team will assess and determine continuity of care, which may include more sessions at the PCC, a referral to a campus or community partner, or a more intensive treatment recommendation. VUMC has found this medical review of treatment to be effective in allowing therapists to draw on perspectives other than their own in recommending the best course for an individual patient, and this is best practice in the medical community.

Use patterns by Vanderbilt graduate students have historically ranged from one session to 135 sessions. Data from the Center for Collegiate Mental Health (CCMH) 2016 Annual Report shows that nationally: **one** is the most common number of appointments for individual therapy; clients averaged 5.86 appointments (Range: 1-117); and 20 percent of clients accounted for over 50 percent of all appointments, with 5 percent of clients accounting for 25 percent of service use. Thus, our patterns of use fit national norms.

Our goal is to ensure that all of our students are receiving the appropriate type and level of care at the right time. We have not and will not place a limit on the number of sessions available to students seeking help.

### **What is likelihood of continuing to receive long-term care at PCC for students who have already been receiving it?**

Students who have already been receiving care will go through the clinical review as well after the sixth session—the beginning of the academic year resets their calendar.

### **What is the PCC's model of care?**

The PCC employs a short-term model of care. Our model of care has been, and will continue to be, structured around an emphasis on connecting students to a network of care that best suits their individual needs. If PCC services are appropriate for a student, the PCC determines the frequency and duration of counseling sessions based on an assessment of student need for services. The question of clinical need drives the model of care. We want to ensure that students are receiving the appropriate type and level of care at the right time while maximizing access opportunities for all students to obtain services.

Research supports short-term care as an effective intervention for students. For instance, short-term psychotherapies have consistently produced comparatively fast improvement on the psychosocial functioning and quality of life of clients who struggle from mood or anxiety disorders (Baldwin, Berkeljon, Atkins, Olsen & Nielsen, 2009; Knekt, Heinonen, Härkäpää, Järvikoski, Virtala, Rissanen, & Lindfors, 2015; Monti, Tonetti, & Ricci Bitti, 2016; Nordberg,

Castonguay, McAleavey, Locke, & Hayes, 2016). The nature of short-term care can vary, but this approach to care emphasizes access for all students, rather than special services for a more limited population.

The PCC is part of a holistic and coordinated **system of care**, which also includes the Student Health Center, Center for Student Wellbeing, VUMC physicians and specialty clinics, other faculty and staff, and community providers. To determine the appropriate health and wellness resources to meet your unique need, the PCC has developed an [interactive decision tool](#).

### **How has the University invested in mental health resources?**

- The [Center for Student Wellbeing \(CSW\)](#) was established in fall 2016 and marks a conscious move toward a network of care at the level appropriate to student need. The CSW provides direct support to students, focused on academic stress, time management and study skills.
- In addition to the 7 staff members at the CSW, the Provost funded new resources at the PCC last year to address graduate student care, resulting in additional therapy hours and a broader attention to the special circumstances of the graduate school population.
- The Graduate School resources are for all graduate students, and the Graduate School is actively hiring a coach to address graduate student needs. The Graduate School and PCC have collaborated to offer a [workshop series](#) - the Psychology of Peak Performance - specifically for graduate and professional students and postdoctoral scholars.
- Note also that specialized programming at the Center for Student Wellbeing includes Professional Staff Coaches, who are trained to provide academic coaching, wellbeing coaching, and alcohol and drug use support services appropriate to the graduate student population.

### **If I am referred to a community provider, how does that work?**

If after clinical review PCC clinicians determine a [community provider](#) will best serve your needs, they will work with you to identify an appropriate community provider. Community providers may be located within specialty clinics at the Vanderbilt University Medical Center or in the general Nashville community. Vanderbilt and the PCC have been actively working to build relationships with community partners to expand our network of care. Some providers take insurance, others use a sliding scale, while others do not take insurance so clients need to pay upfront and then file a claim with their insurance carriers.

### **How much would using a community provider cost me?**

Vanderbilt students have a variety of health insurance plans, and there are many community providers, so there is no singular answer to this question. However, one of our overarching goals is to make your care options as affordable and accessible as possible. If a graduate student is using the Gallagher Student Health Insurance Plan, the plan has a \$150 per insured person, per policy year deductible that applies to services received from a Preferred or an In-Network Provider and a \$500 per insured person, per policy year deductible that applies to services

received from an Out-of-Network Provider. Services provided by a Preferred Provider are generally covered at 90%; services provided by an In-Network Provider are generally covered at 85%; and services provided by an Out-of-Network Provider are generally covered at 65%.

More information on the student health insurance is [available here](#).

### **How has care been adapted to meet the needs of Graduate and Professional students?**

We've worked diligently to ensure that the mental health and wellbeing care needs of our graduate and professional student population are met. We understand that you deal with real and significant challenges that are unique.

- Dr. David Sacks serves as the PCC's designated liaison to support the Graduate and Professional student population.
- The Graduate School and the PCC engage in active cross-training to proactively address the needs of the Graduate and Professional student population, a more mature audience that needs enhanced support with respect to family and work concerns.
- The Graduate Process Groups at the PCC provide a group space for graduate students with a broad spectrum of mental health concerns to offer each other support and feedback in working toward change.

### **How do I learn more about student health insurance?**

For students utilizing Vanderbilt's student health insurance plan, more information is [available here](#), and [Kristina Miller](#) is the Vanderbilt student health insurance liaison.

To help students navigate the complexities of student health insurance, the Graduate Student Council will host a forum this fall discussing utilizing student health insurance.

### **In what ways can students provide feedback or input on the topic of mental health?**

Over the last year students have actively participated in several town halls and focus groups dedicated to mental health and wellness. As we continue to enhance mental health services for Vanderbilt students, there are several ongoing mechanisms for providing input:

- Submit questions to the Graduate School at [GSmentalhealthservices@vanderbilt.edu](mailto:GSmentalhealthservices@vanderbilt.edu);
- [Share feedback with the PCC](#);
- Share your concerns with the [Chancellor's Strategic Planning Committee on Mental Health and Wellbeing](#);
- Engage in dialogue with [your elected leaders with the GSC](#).

If you or your colleagues have other recommendations for topics of inclusion on this FAQ document, please submit them to [GSmentalhealthservices@vanderbilt.edu](mailto:GSmentalhealthservices@vanderbilt.edu).

