Frequently Asked Questions and Myths about CAPS

FAQ:

**Reasons: Does someone need a diagnosed mental health issue to use CAPS?**

Students who come into CAPS for services run the entire psychological continuum from developmental concerns like transitioning to college and fitting in to full-blown psychiatric crises like a first psychotic break or a manic episode. Any concern is a good
concern to bring to CAPS.

**Medication: How likely is it that I will be put on medication?**

Taking medication is an individual choice—we do not and cannot put you on medication. At times, CAPS therapists might encourage students to meet with one of our psychiatrists (medical doctors who can prescribe medications) to discuss the possibility of medications while addressing any questions and concerns. Even if you meet with a psychiatrist, the decision to take medication is up to you. At times, medication can be helpful for sleep issues, depression, mood swings, and anxiety.

**Finances: How much does it cost to use CAPS?**

Most services at CAPS have already been paid for in the Campus Health Fee that regular, full-time undergraduate students, graduate students and Postdoctoral fellows pay with tuition and fees. You will be charged for medication management and any missed appointments.

**Confidentiality: Will anyone find out that I used CAPS?**

CAPS respects your privacy and is a confidential service. Except in life threatening emergencies, or unless required by federal, state, or local law(s), your information will not be released without your permission.

If you would like CAPS to share relevant information with another party, you must sign a release of information prior to our doing so. CAPS may share information with an outside party without a signed release of information only if you are at risk of hurting yourself or someone else, or if you state that someone specific is in danger.

On occasion, CAPS receives telephone calls from parents about your mental health care. If you are 18 years of age or older, CAPS providers are unable to release any information to your parents (even whether you have been seen at CAPS) without your explicit verbal or written permission.

**Appointments: Do I start by making an appointment?**

Students are encouraged to call CAPS for an initial assessment by phone at 919-966-
3658 between 9:00 am - 12:00 pm or 1:00 pm - 4:00 pm Monday - Thursday or 9:30 - 12:00 pm and 1:00 pm - 4:00 pm on Friday. These first-time phone assessments are helpful for a variety of reasons. Students are be able to talk to a mental health professional on the day that they want help, rather than waiting for an appointment, while having the opportunity to share their stories and understand more about CAPS resources. This is the first step to connecting to CAPS for services.

Students are welcome to call CAPS 24/7 at 919-966-3658. Calling outside of office hours will connect students with a trained mental health professional who can assist with concerns in that moment, and remind students who want ongoing treatment to connect with CAPS during initial assessment hours.

**Eligibility: Who can use CAPS?**

CAPS services are available to anyone who pays the student health fee. This includes regular, full-time undergraduate students, graduate students, Postdoctoral fellows, and partners of students/post-docs who have paid the fee.

**Emergency: What are emergency options?**

A person eligible for care can always present for an initial appointment between 9:00 a.m. to Noon and 1:00 to 4:00 p.m. Monday through Thursday and Fridays between 9:30 a.m. to noon and 1:00 to 4:00 p.m.

In case of a psychiatric emergency, the person may come into CAPS between 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday.

If it is after hours, go to the UNC hospitals emergency room.

If a parent or friend is concerned about a student in crisis who is unable or unwilling to go to the emergency room, that person should contact the Dean of Students office during working hours 919-966-4042 or if it is after hours they should contact Public Safety at 919-962-8100 and request assistance.

**Limitations: If I have already been seen at CAPS and am now in crisis, can I be seen again?**

CAPS will not turn anyone away because they have been seen in the past for brief therapy. During the initial walk-in appointment, students and CAPS therapists determine
the most appropriate services. These services may include brief therapy, a referral coordination [1] for longer-term therapy in the community, medication evaluation [2] with a psychiatrist, or a CAPS therapy group [3]. Groups are open to individuals who have paid the student health fee, regardless of whether or not they have been to CAPS before for brief therapy.

**Limitations: Is there a session limit for how much someone can be seen at CAPS?**

We got rid of session limits years ago.

All students and post-docs are eligible for an initial evaluation. The initial evaluation helps us determine what the best treatment option will be for each student’s individual need. CAPS generally provides short-term counseling because that is the format appropriate for most of the students who seek help at CAPS. In some cases, longer term counseling or specialized therapy is in the student’s best interest, and a referral will be made to an outside provider.

**Source URL:** https://caps.unc.edu/about-us/frequently-asked-questions-and-myths-about-caps

**Links**
[1] https://caps.unc.edu/node/832  
[2] https://caps.unc.edu/services/medication-management  
[3] https://caps.unc.edu/services/group-therapy/therapy-groups-offered