

Frequently Asked Questions and Myths about CAPS

Many Carolina students have questions about mental health services at UNC.

We're going to share with you today some things you may have thought were true about CAPS but really aren't.

Myth: You have to be suicidal to be seen at CAPS.

Fact: 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.

Myth: CAPS will only see students for 6 sessions of therapy.

Fact: We got rid of session limits years ago. Most students when we look back at our data are completely satisfied with and complete their therapy at CAPS within three to six sessions and now that we no longer have session limits this gives us the flexibility to work with other students for eight or fifteen or even twenty sessions.

Myth: Every student who comes to CAPS is referred to the community.

Fact: The vast majority of students who walk in for CAPS services receive services here. In fact about thirty percent of students are referred to the community to reach their mental health needs and we have staff on hand to help with that connection.

Myth: CAPS Groups are less valuable than individual therapy.

Fact: CAPS groups address the typical concerns of college students. Some group participants tell us that they really appreciate the ability to give and receive feedback with all the members of the group rather than just the one therapist who would be in the room for an individual session.

Myth: Only first year students need CAPS services.

Fact: All students and post doctoral fellows at UNC can benefit from CAPS. When we

look back at our visit data there's a pretty even distribution across academic years. These numbers are from the 2015-2016 academic year.

You might still have questions about CAPS and you can learn more on our website or you can walk in for your first time visit.

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 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>