**Standard 11: Professionalism, Ethics and Legal Maters**

**Situation 1: Suicidal Ideation**

Student X came to my office to drop off a note that his friend, my student, had written in class. The note mentioned that she felt tired of suffering and that she did not want to be in this world any longer. When student X asked her if she was thinking of harming herself, she said yes. Student X was very worried about his friend. The first thing that I thought was appropriate to do was to discuss this with my supervisor. I wanted to get her input on whether or not I would call the parents about this. We decided to call the student to my office and see what she had to say about the letter. After reviewing confidentiality and its limitations once more with the student, we started talking about the letter. She mentioned she felt like harming herself when she wrote the note but not while she was talking to me. After talking some more, I told her I needed to call her parents. She asked me not to and started crying. She also mentioned she would not have the guts to kill herself but she wrote the letter in a moment of frustration. I explained that I was obligated to do so because I was worried about her. I gave her the option to stay in the room with me as I called or I could do it alone. She decided to leave the room. I talked to parents about the note and they were extremely worried but thankful I called them. I immediately documented those conversations in ASPEN. I have seen this student for a while now and problems with parents have not gotten better. After this incident, I decided to talk to the Student Support Advocate at Mariner to get the student and her parents parenting classes. I did mention the idea to the parents on the phone and they agreed to have the Student Support Advocate give them a call.

**Situation2: Cutting**

Student was sent from her math class because she was cutting. I first took her to the nurse and then to my office. Even though this student is under my case load, I always consult with her assigned counselor before I make any decisions. In this case, both of us talked to her for a little bit, and then it was just the student and I for a while more. Administration was notified by the teacher that sent her, so the student met with the assistant principal as well. All she kept telling me was to not tell her parents. She said they get very mad when the school calls. I explained to her what I have explained to her many times before, about confidentiality and how I need to call parents when a student is harming self and/or others. She begged me for a while, and even though I felt really bad, I had to make the phone call. I gave her the option to stay in the room with me as I was making the call. She decided to stay. This is a student that I have talked about with the Student Support Advocate to refer her to outside counseling. I have seen her every other week, from the beginning of the year, and she definitely needs extra support.

  I followed Ethical Standards by:

·         **A.1. Responsibility to students**

o   **A.1.b:** Is concerned with the educational, academic, career, personal and social needs and encourages the maximum development of every student.

o   **A.1.d:** Is knowledgeable of laws, regulations, and policies relating to students and strives to protect and inform students regarding their rights.

·         **A.2. Confidentiality**

o   **A.2.B:** Keeps information confidential unless disclosure is required to prevent clear an imminent danger to the student or others. Counselors will consult with appropriate professionals when in doubt as to the validity of an exception.

o   **A.2.G:** Recognizes his/her primary obligation for confidentiality is to the student but balances that obligation with an understanding of the legal and inherent rights of parents/guardians to be the guiding voice in their children’s lives.

·         **A.5 Appropriate Referrals**

o   **A.5.a:** Makes referrals when necessary or appropriate to outside resources. Appropriate referrals may necessitate informing both parents/guardians and students of applicable resources.

·         **A.7. Danger to self or Others**

o   **A.7.a:** Informs parents/ guardians or appropriate authorities when the student’s condition indicates a clear and imminent danger to the student or others. This is to be done after careful deliberation and, where possible, after consultation with other counseling professionals.

o   **A.7.B:** Will attempt to minimize threat to a student and may chose to1) inform the students of actions to be taken, 2) involve the student in a three-way communication with parents/guardians when breaching confidentiality or 3) allow the student to have input as to how and to whom the breach will be made.

Thank you,

Luisa F. Zapata