

Counseling & Psychological Services (CAPS) FAQs

What is CAPS' mission?

CAPS provides mental health counseling to students, and consultation, outreach, and education to all OSU community members. We do this in order to (1) facilitate students' academic success, mental health, and personal development; and (2) promote a culture of positive mental health at OSU.

Why is there such high demand for CAPS services?

National trends have shown an increase in young adult mental health concerns (e.g., depression, anxiety) for the past 10-15 years¹. What is happening nationally is also happening locally, as we observe increases in the number of students who report experiencing distress related to their mental health, and the number of these students seeking CAPS' support for their distress.

How has CAPS' capacity to serve students changed during recent years?

The number of students CAPS now serves annually (3,201) is a 69% increase when compared to 2013. The number of appointments CAPS now provides annually (15,311) shows a 53% increase during this same time period.

Is the struggle to keep up with demand for mental health services unique to OSU?

No and yes. No, it is not unique, in that nearly every university is struggling to keep up with this ever-increasing demand. And yes, it is unique to OSU, in that CAPS provides mental health services to almost 13% of our student population annually. The percentage of OSU students using CAPS is 51% higher than the average similarly sized institution². On the one hand, this statistical "overutilization" at CAPS is great and by design—because it shows that our efforts to reduce stigma on campus and to increase help-seeking (e.g., Kognito online training³, Reach Out for Success syllabus statement⁴) are working. But on the other hand, it also creates challenges for us in trying to keep up with this higher than average demand.

How long do students have to wait to see a counselor?

CAPS offers many different types of appointments, depending on each student's unique needs (please see Table 1 for a description of CAPS appointment types). The wait times vary based on the type of appointment. Students in crisis are always seen the same day (CAPS crisis support is available 24/7/365). If a student who is not in crisis wants to explore options for receiving CAPS services then they can schedule a triage appointment with a CAPS triage counselor, typically within 1-3 days. With their triage counselor they can decide if they want to participate in a single session (typical wait 3-5 days), group therapy (typically starts 3rd week of each term), individual therapy related to the student having experienced interpersonal violence (typical wait 1-3 days), or brief individual therapy for various other reasons (typical wait 3-5 weeks). All of these estimated wait times can also be influenced by the time in the term and a student's available hours.

¹ Twenge, J.M., Cooper, A.B., Joiner, T.E., Duffy, M.E., & Binau, S.G. (2019). Age, Period, and Cohort Trends in Mood Disorder Indicators and Suicide-Related Outcomes in a Nationally Representative Dataset, 2005-017. *Journal of Abnormal Psychology, 128*, 185-199.

² The Association for University and College Counseling Center Directors Annual Survey: 2019.

<https://taucccd.memberclicks.net/assets/documents/Survey/2019%20AUCCCD%20Survey-2020-05-31-PUBLIC.pdf>

³ Kognito Online Mental Health Training: <https://today.oregonstate.edu/story/kognito-teaches-staff-students-how-help-those-distress>

⁴ Reach Out for Success Mandatory Syllabus Statement: <https://counseling.oregonstate.edu/required-syllabus-statement>

How do CAPS wait times compare to typical wait times in the local community?

Given high demand for mental health services, many local counselors have full schedules and are not currently accepting any new patients. For those counselors who are accepting new patients, the wait time can often be as long as 8-12 weeks, which is longer than CAPS' typical wait times.

Is CAPS the only OSU unit that supports students' mental health?

No. There are numerous OSU units that support student mental health, both directly and indirectly. Many of the students who access treatment at Student Health Services receive care for a broad range of mental health concerns, which include receiving psychotropic prescriptions (e.g., anti-depressants). There are also units like the Survivor Advocacy Resource Center, the Student Care Team, and the Human Service Resource Center that have been created to support students.

How has funding for CAPS changed during recent years?

CAPS is funded entirely through the student health fee. In large part to address students' increased demand for services, this fee amount was increased 19% in FY20, and then an additional 17.5% in FY21. This increased funding includes financial support of four new counselor positions, which are currently being searched for and anticipated to begin working at CAPS summer 2021.

How does funding for CAPS counselors compare to other similar universities?

Universities similar in size to OSU have 18.84 full-time counselors on average⁵. CAPS currently has 18 full-time counselors, and with CAPS' recent budget increase it now has funding approval for 22 full-time counselor positions. When these positions are filled (summer 2021) OSU's counseling staffing will be 19% above the national average.

Can't OSU and CAPS do more to support students' mental health?

Yes! Although CAPS has drastically increased the number of students it now serves (3,201), and the number of appointments it now provides (15,311) annually, it acknowledges that these increases still aren't enough, and that we can always do better. Although there are not any simple solutions to this immense national challenge, we are continuously evolving and looking for ways to provide more and better support to our students.

How can I support CAPS?

Given the scope of the challenge we are facing in regards to supporting students' continually increasing mental health needs, any adequate solution must be bigger than CAPS. It takes a village. Reflect on your own role in the OSU community, and how you can personally impact change. Educate yourself about what is happening. Participate in the Kognito online training⁶. If you are a faculty member, please use the Reach Out for Success syllabus statement⁷ as an opportunity to communicate your support for students who struggle with mental health challenges. And if you are a student, please consider serving on the CAPS Student Advisory Board⁸.

*CAPS utilization data are based on the 2018-19 academic year, which is the most recent complete year that was not impacted by the pandemic.

⁵ The Association for University and College Counseling Center Directors Annual Survey: 2019.

<https://taucccd.memberclicks.net/assets/documents/Survey/2019%20AUCCCD%20Survey-2020-05-31-PUBLIC.pdf>

⁶Kognito Online Mental Health Training: <https://today.oregonstate.edu/story/kognito-teaches-staff-students-how-help-those-distress>

⁷ Reach Out for Success Mandatory Syllabus Statement: <https://counseling.oregonstate.edu/required-syllabus-statement>

⁸ CAPS Student Advisory Board: <https://counseling.oregonstate.edu/advisory>

Table 1: CAPS Appointment Types

Appointment Type	Appointment Description	Typical Wait Time
Crisis	Students who are in crisis meet with an on-call CAPS counselor (during regular business hours) to receive support, plan for their safety, and get connected with appropriate resources. Outside of regular business hours the student would talk with a crisis counselor whom CAPS contracts with (and this service is available 24/7/365)	Students in crisis are seen the same day, and usually within an hour . Students who call the after-hours crisis line are immediately connected to speak with a crisis counselor.
Triage	In a triage appointment, a student (who is not in crisis) talks with a CAPS Triage Counselor about what is going on for them, and they collaborative determine what sort of services or supports would best meet their needs.	Typically available within 1-3 days (wait times may be slightly longer at the beginning of a term)
Single Session Clinic	If a student has a specific problem they're struggling with (e.g., managing self-doubt), then they can choose to meet with a CAPS counselor for a one-time appointment in which they will co-create an action plan for them to address the challenge.	Typically available within 3-5 days
Brief Individual & Couples Counseling	If a student wants to participate in brief individual or couples counseling then they are assigned to a counselor, who typically meets with them every other week for 4-5 sessions.	Wait times can vary widely, depending on when in the term or year a student requests this service. After their initial triage appointment that happens within 1-3 days, a typical wait time to receive an individual/couples appointment would be 3-5 weeks (as a comparator, the typical wait time to see an off-campus counselor in Corvallis is often as long as 8-12 weeks)
Individual Counseling (Interpersonal Violence Services)	If a student has experienced interpersonal violence during the college years then they are provided with prioritized access	If the student is coming in for reasons directly related to the violence they have experienced then they are typically given an

	to individual counseling, as part of OSU's Title IX supportive services.	individual counseling appointment within 1-2 days .
Group Therapy	CAPS typically offers 15-20 therapy groups each term, with the focus ranging from clinical issues (e.g., anxiety) to identity-based support (e.g., for trans-identified students)	Therapy groups typically start around week 3 of the term, and meet weekly. Wait times depend on how far prior to week 3 the student signs up for the group
Consultation	A CAPS counselor is on-call M-F, 9a-4p, to consult with OSU faculty, staff, students, and family members if they have any concerns about a students' mental health and want to consult with a CAPS counselor.	Consultations are typically scheduled for the same day, often within 1-2 hours .