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**Toolkit­­: Mental Health OutReach Survey**

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# Overview­­­­­

**What it is:** A survey to help medical students utilize their school’s mental health resources.

**Purpose:** To facilitate a relationship between medical students and their school’s mental health service. It explains how to make appointments, cost of services, and common reasons that students seek mental health treatment. For students who feel they want to make an appointment with their school’s mental health professionals, this survey functions as an active outreach to students and a streamlining of the appointment-making process.

**Outcome:** Increased familiarity with student mental health services and increased utilization of mental health services.

**Contents:** Survey template

**Owner:** University of Colorado School of Medicine

## About

The OSR at University of Colorado School of Medicine designed this survey as a means for the school’s mental health services to reach out to students in need, taking the burden off struggling students to set up their own treatment. University of Colorado SOM has robust mental health services available to students at a low cost, but many students are unaware of the services offered or how to access them. The goals of this survey are twofold: (1) to educate all students about the services available to them so they know where to turn when they need assistance and (2) to streamline the process of making appointments for students who want to establish care with Student Mental Health. This survey explains the mental health services available to medical students, how to access them, and asks if students would like to be contacted to schedule an intake appointment. If students indicate they would like to be contacted, the survey also collects contact information from the students. This survey is distributed via email to all four classes of medical students. It runs for one week, and is repeated once per semester. We work closely with our Student Mental Health division to ensure that this survey is confidential, HIPAA compliant, and convenient for the employees at the Student Mental Health offices.

## Steps

1. **Contact your school’s Student Mental Health office**

Having the support of your mental health services is critical to the success of this project. We work closely with the director of Student Mental Health services as well as the scheduler who coordinates appointments and providers’ schedules. This ensures that the Student Mental Health office will be fully prepared to respond to the rapid influx of survey responses. Be sure to include them in all steps of your survey planning and distribution.

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1. **Create a timeline for your survey.**

* Decide when you will administer the survey.

Choose a time in the semester when students are familiar with the stresses they will confront at their respective stage in medical school. However, be sure that you don’t administer the survey at a time that students will be less likely to respond (i.e. at the beginning/end of a semester or during a dedicated study period). Next, be sure that your Student Mental Health office is prepared to schedule additional patients when you distribute the survey and intake an increased number of patients in the weeks following your survey.

* Clear appointment slots ahead of time.

We asked Student Mental Health to clear appointment slots specifically for survey respondents during the weeks after the survey went out. This made scheduling easier both for students and the Student Mental Health providers.

* Set a date and time to close the survey.

It is important to ensure students know when the survey will close so they do not attempt to use it to schedule an appointment after your survey period.

1. **Design the survey and plan its implementation**

* Choose a survey platform.

We have used SurveyMonkey and Qualtrics because our School of Medicine have paid accounts. With SurveyMonkey, be cautious of this tool if you do not have a paid account because the free account limits the amount of responses that your survey can receive. Be sure that the link to your survey is secure and that only your Student Mental Health office can access the results.

* Plan the logistics of survey administration.

We emailed the text of the survey to our contact at the Student Mental Health office, who then created the survey securely. She then sent us the link to the completed survey so we could distribute it to our classmates. Determine who in the Student Mental Health office will contact students who respond that they would like to make an appointment. This person should never be involved with assessing students academically in any way.

* Establish a timeframe for contacting the respondents.

We worked with our Student Mental Health office to ensure students would receive a phone call to schedule an appointment within 24 hours of responding to the survey (excluding responses received on the weekend).

* Create the text of your survey.

Because one goal of this survey is to explain your school’s mental health services to all students, not just those who desire immediate treatment, the initial page of the survey should contain concise, important information. Emphasize that the survey will take less than one minute (it will!), and that the results will never be seen by anyone who assesses students academically. Ensure that the text of the survey is accessible and non-confrontational, and examine your text for any wording that might deter students from answering honestly. In addition, because this survey facilitates a connection between potential patients and a healthcare provider, ensure that your survey includes all of the necessary information that any student might need in the event that they are in the midst of a mental health emergency.

* Finally, test your survey to be sure that the format is correct, your branching logic flows well, and that your results remain confidential.

1. **Distribute the survey**

We send the survey to all medical students at our institution. Emphasize that this survey will be open for a finite amount of time (we do one week) so that students don’t use it as a primary means of accessing mental health services. Consider sending out a reminder email to the student body before the survey closes.

1. **Analyze the response rate**

If possible, ask your Student Mental Health office to share the response rate of the survey with you. We track how many students respond that they would like to be contacted to schedule an appointment, and what the breakdown is by class. This allows us to assess the efficacy of our survey without breaching the confidentiality of the survey responses.

## Advice

* Check your survey thoroughly before sending it out! Double check that the settings on your survey technology are set for your desired outcome; for example, ensure that you don’t inadvertently share survey results with all respondents (this is a default setting on SurveyMonkey!).
* Contact your Student Mental Health offices once per day when the survey is live. Be sure that staff members are adequately supported and able to schedule.
* Ask for input from your Office of Student Life before administering your survey. Because this is sensitive information, your administration can help you ensure that students’ information is truly confidential.
* It may be difficult to anticipate the response you will receive to this survey. If possible, alert other offices on campus that you might need their help to schedule students in the event that more students respond than your Student Mental Health department can schedule. We enlist the assistance of our campus Nurse Practitioner clinic. When our response rate is high, the Nurse Practitioner clinic helps us schedule new patients without any delay.
* Work with your Student Mental Health office to clear appointment slots for students in the week during and after your survey is administered. Your survey will be most successful if students can be seen for an initial appointment within at least one week of responding.
* Try to facilitate after-hours appointments for students in their clinical rotations.

Follow-up questions?

What initiatives have you tried to help students at your institution access mental health services?

Contact University of Colorado OSR Rep Sarah Williams ([sarah.a.williams@ucdenver.edu](mailto:sarah.a.williams@ucdenver.edu)) to share your ideas.

# Sample survey

## Email sent to students

Dear students,

Your classmates have developed a survey to help medical students access mental health services on campus. We know that medical school can be stressful, unpredictable, and unrelenting at times, so we hope you can use this survey as one more tool to maintain your wellness.

This survey is entirely **confidential**and should take **less than one minute**to complete.  By completing the survey, you will learn about the mental health resources available to us and can choose to be contacted by Student Mental Health, one of the mental health resources available for medical students on the Anschutz Medical Campus, to make an appointment.

Note that this survey will close on \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. Please don't hesitate to contact me with any questions or concerns!

Click here to take the survey: (Insert link)

Sincerely,

Sarah Williams, MSII

OSR Representative

## Page 1

**Would you like to be contacted by Student Mental Health?**

We would like to improve medical students’ access to mental health services on campus. By answering “yes” to the question below, Anschutz Medical Campus Student Mental Health will contact you to schedule an appointment to talk about your mental health. Your answer to this question is completely confidential and in no way will affect your academic or professional standing.

Some students feel they only need one or two appointments to manage their mental health; others choose to use Student Mental Health as a long-term resource. Common reasons why students access Student Mental Health include:

* Test anxiety
* Relationship issues
* Depression or anxiety
* Academic performance
* Mental illness
* Substance abuse

Mental health care is 100% confidential, and you will never be evaluated academically by anyone who treats you for a mental health-related issue.

If your health insurance is not accepted by Student Mental Health (e.g. Kaiser) or you cannot afford your deductible, you are eligible for 10 appointments at no cost to you.

For more information on Student Mental Health, please visit our website: <https://medschool.cuanschutz.edu/psychiatry/PatientCare/amc-student-mental-health>. You can also contact Student Mental Health directly at 303-724-4716.

1. Would you like to be contacted by Student Mental Health to schedule an appointment? (Required question)
   1. Yes (Directed to page 2)
   2. No (Directed to page 4)

## Page 2

1. If you would like to be contacted to make an appointment with Student Mental Health, please leave your contact information.

This information is 100% confidential and will not be seen by anyone outside of Student Mental Health.

Name:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Phone:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Email:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

## Page 3

**What next?**

You will be contacted within the next 24 hours by Student Mental Health to schedule an appointment with one of our professional counselors. If you are answering this survey on a Friday or a weekend, expect follow-up the next business day. If you don’t want to wait, feel free to call our clinic coordinator at 303-724-4716 to schedule an appointment. Special blocks of time have been reserved for medical students to ensure you get an appointment as soon as possible.

At your first appointment, you will speak with a mental health professional about your needs. Some students choose to use AMC Student Mental Health for their continued needs; others use it as a referral service to trusted mental health professionals not affiliated with CU School of Medicine.

If it is after business hours and you would like to speak with someone urgently, please call 720-848-0000 and ask for the psychiatrist on call.

If you feel suicidal or if you are thinking about hurting someone else, please go to the Emergency Department of any hospital immediately or call 303-724-4444 to speak to Anschutz Medical Campus emergency services. Identify yourself as an Anschutz student to ensure you receive the quickest care possible.

**Cost of care**

The Student Mental Health clinic accepts most health insurance plans. However, if you have an insurance plan that we do not contract with, you will qualify for five appointments at no cost to you. We will work with you to find the best option for continued care, depending on your insurance plan, if you choose to attend more than ten appointments.­­

**Confidentiality**

Mental health care is 100% confidential, and you will never be evaluated academically by anyone who treats you for a mental health-related issue. No one who is not directly related to your care will be able to access information about your mental health unless you release the information to them.

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Thank you!

If you would like more information on the services Student Mental Health offers, please visit our website: <https://medschool.cuanschutz.edu/psychiatry/PatientCare/amc-student-mental-health>.

We look forward to working with you!